

# WATSON TOWNSHIP PARKS PLAN <sup>2023</sup><sub>2028</sub>

*Watson Township, Allegan County, Michigan*





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Watson Township Board

Supervisor	<b>Kevin Travis</b>
Clerk	<b>Kelli Morris</b>
Treasurer	<b>Stephanie Caulder</b>
Trustee	<b>Michelle Harris</b>
Trustee	<b>John Caras</b>

## Watson Township Planning Commission

Chair	<b>Bruce Bos</b>
Vice Chair	<b>Bev McKinnon</b>
Secretary	<b>Jay Roberts-Eveland</b>
Board Representative	<b>John Caras</b>
Member	<b>Shawn Caulder</b>
Member	<b>Owen Ramey</b>
Member	<b>Nick Evans</b>

This Plan was prepared as a collaborative effort between the Watson Township Board, the Watson Township Planning Commission, Professional Code Inspections of Michigan, Inc. (PCI), and the Watson Township community. A special thank you is owed to the many individuals and boards that contributed to the planning process.



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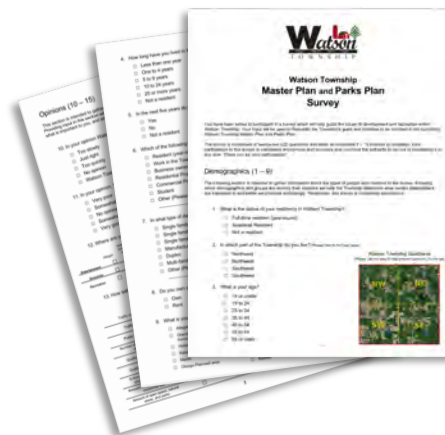
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Watson Township has an abundance of natural recreational treasures—Plentiful inland lakes of all shapes and sizes to sprawling blankets of forestry harboring a diverse range of Michigan wildlife. These outstanding natural resources encourage both local and out-of-Township hunters, skiers, cyclists, bird watchers, boaters, snowmobilers, and other recreational enthusiasts alike to spend time within the Township.

A Recreation Plan is required to apply for Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recreation grants. This Plan serves as a framework by which to develop parks and recreational opportunities within a municipality to best meet the needs of area residents and visitors. The Watson Township Parks Plan is the result of a collaborative effort by the Watson Township Board, Watson Township Planning Commission, Professional Code Inspections of Michigan, Inc. (PCI), and the Watson Township Community.

This plan consists of eight chapters and one appendix, all organized to best exhibit the process and feedback by which the Township's goals and objectives are derived. The most significant source of public input was gathered through the Watson Township Master and Parks Plan Survey; a joint survey used to collect information from local stakeholders for the Township Master Plan and this Parks and Recreation Plan alike. The survey consists of twenty-two questions covering demographics, opinions on Township and regional amenities, and preferences for future recreational and community development. The results of this survey are presented in Chapter 6 of this document.



*Watson Township community landscape, 2022.*

Further community input was sourced from the publishing of various legal notices and subsequent public hearings. While a necessary step to qualify for MDNR grants, they also provide an open invitation to residents and stakeholders to comment on and directly influence the production of the Parks and Recreation Plan.

The result of these input devices is a curated set of Township goals and objectives designed to further development of abundant, accessible, and sustainable parks and recreational opportunities for the future of the Watson Township community.

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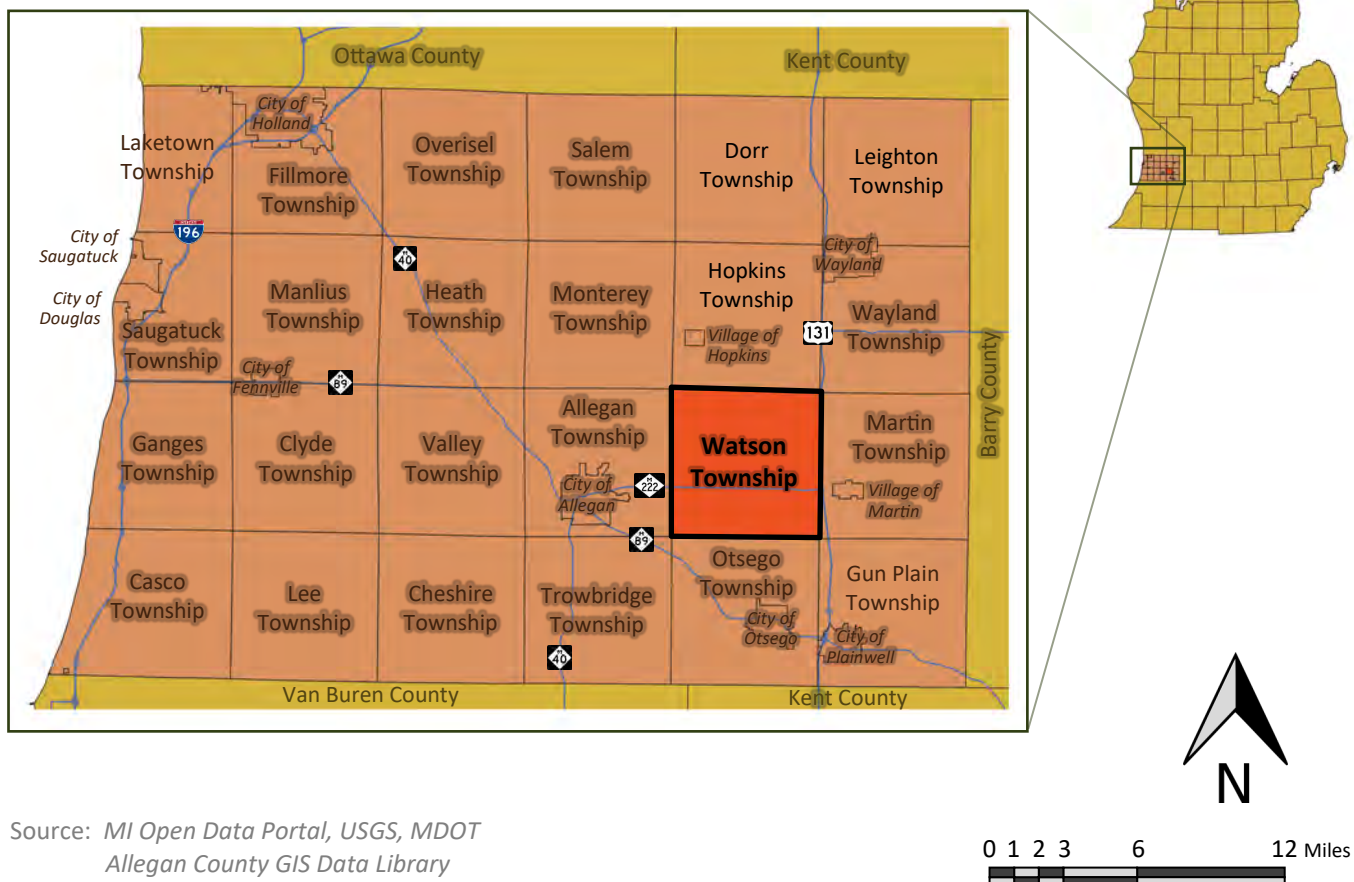


# 2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Community Features

Watson Township is in southeast-central Allegan County and comprises 36 square miles. It is bordered to the north by Hopkins Township, south by Otsego Township, east by Martin Township, and west by Allegan Township. Two roads serve as arterial corridors for the Watson community—US-131 approximately following the east border of the Township and M-222 straddling the lower-middle latitude of the Township. US-131 connects the Township to the City of Wayland and Grand Rapids 4.5 and 17 miles north, respectively, and the City of Otsego, City of Plainwell, and City of Kalamazoo 2.3, 3.5, and 13 miles south, respectively. M-222 connects the Township to the City of Allegan 1.7 miles west and the Village of Martin 0.5 miles east.

## Map 2.1. Watson Township in Allegan County and Michigan





# Physical Characteristics

## Topography

The Township topography varies from extreme hills and valleys to the north and east to flatter, rolling knolls in the southwest. Elevations range from 890 to 700 feet. Local geographic extremes are the result of glacial formations in millennia past carving out lakes and depositing mounds in jagged, chaotic patterns; Likewise, the flatter corners of the Township are attributable to floodplains and washout basins resulting from those same glaciers (Map 2.2).

## Hydrology

The Township is webbed with various small waterways such as Miner Creek, School Section Brook, Schnable Brook, and Miller Creek. All but the last of these examples ultimately meander southwestward in Trowbridge Township where they converge into the singular Schnable Brook before meeting with the Kalamazoo River. Miller Creek, meanwhile, is a feeder stream exiting the northeast corner of the Township into Hopkins Township where it eventually converges with the Rabbit River. The listed Kalamazoo River tributaries are all designated *warm transitional streams* while Miller Creek is a *cold transitional stream*, as identified by MI EGLE (Map 2.3).

There is also approximately 448 acres of various lakes and ponds within the Township, most notably Big Lake (137 acres), Schnable Lake (50 acres), and Wetheral Lake (21 acres). This acreage accounts for 1.94% of the total Township area.

## Land Cover

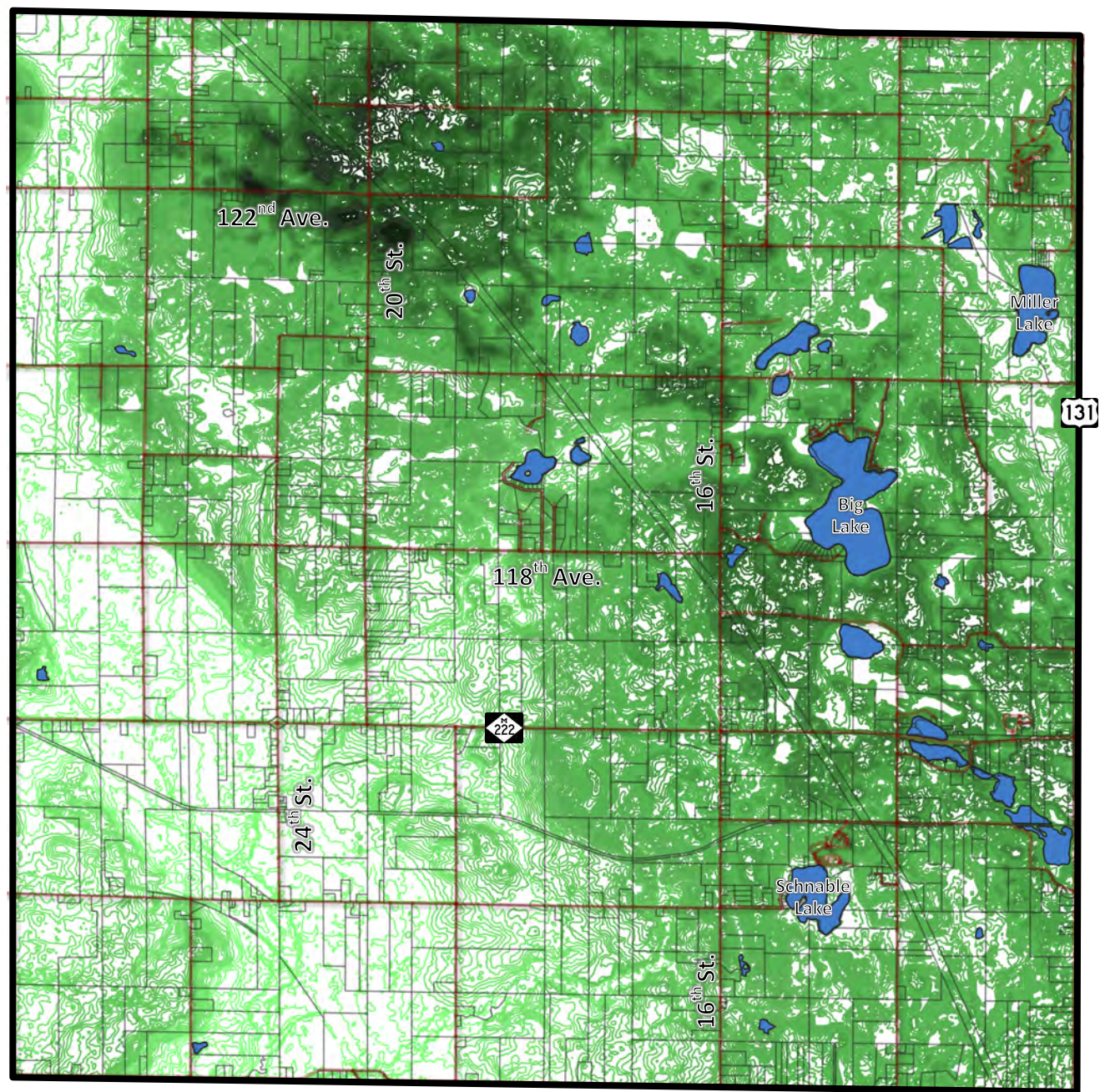
Much of the Township's historic land cover consists of Beech-Sugar Maple Forests as identified by MI EGLE. Today, these forests have been cut back to make way for agriculture and residential development in many areas. However, the Township remains heavily wooded to the east in areas where ponds and other bodies of water are denser and the elevation changes more extreme. Moving west, these forests thin out and eventually become large pockets of woods and corridors following the various creeks and streams running south to the Kalamazoo River. The wooded areas provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and contribute to various outdoor recreational opportunities (Map 2.4).

## Land Use

The majority of land today is either actively farmed or remains wooded and undeveloped. A growing trend among communities situated along US-131 between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo has been increasing demand for residential development. Watson Township; however, has seen a slower increase in demand for this development than some neighboring Townships, likely due in part to its distance from Grand Rapids and competition with the Cities of Otsego and Plainwell for ex-urban Kalamazoo living.

The Township has very little Commercial and Industrial zoning, concentrated almost entirely along US-131 near the M-222 entrance/exit with scattered Commercial properties along the corridor toward the City of Allegan (Map 2.5).

# Map 2.2. Watson Township Topography

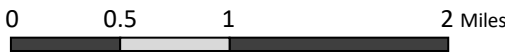
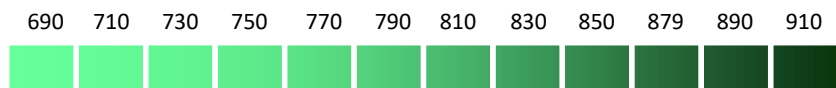


## LEGEND

### Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads
- Lakes

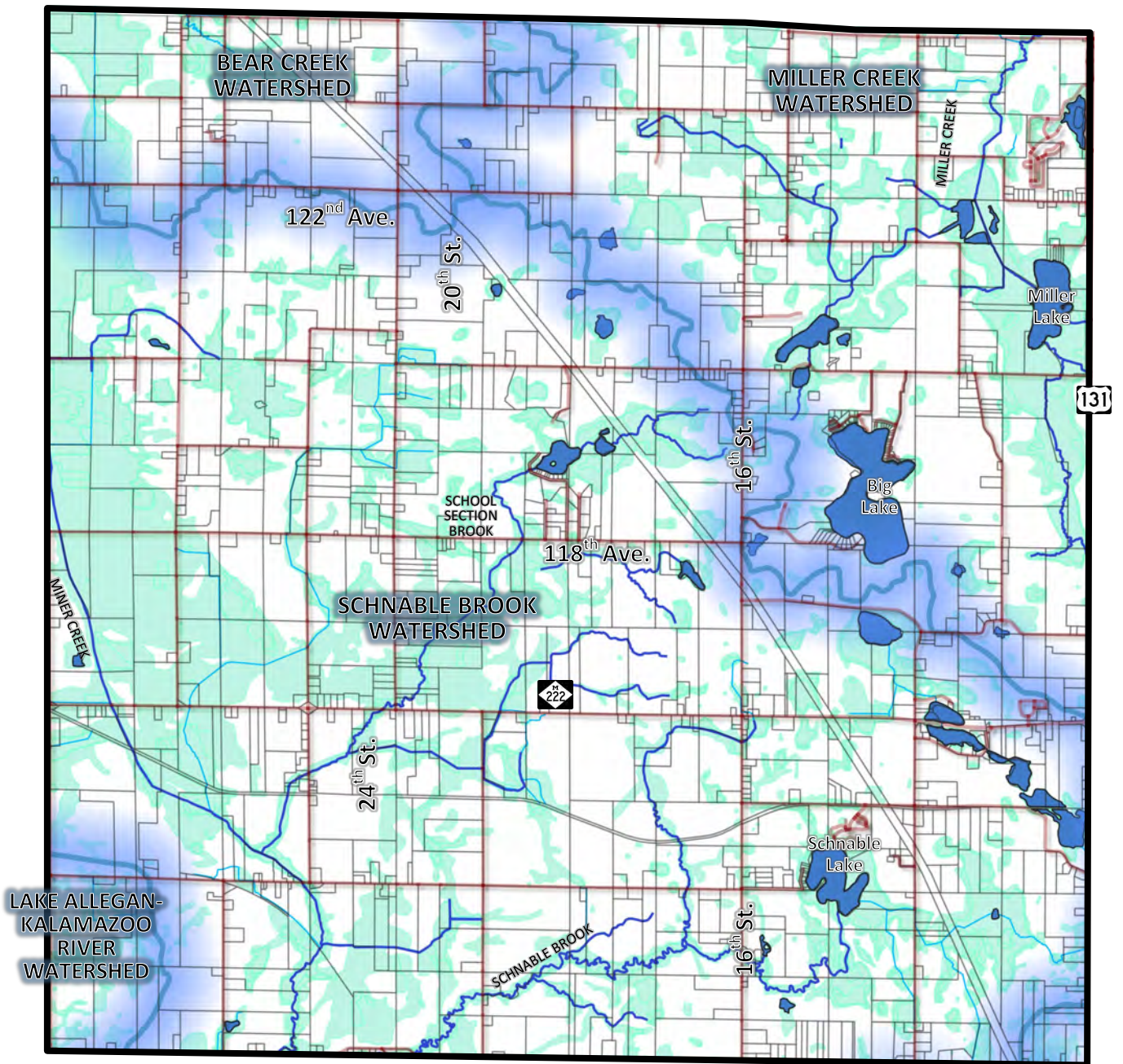
### Elevation (feet)



Source: MI Open Data Portal, USGS  
Allegan County GIS Data Library



# Map 2.3. Watson Township Hydrology



## LEGEND

### Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads

### Hydrology

- County Drains
- Rivers
- Watershed Boundaries
- Lakes
- Wetlands

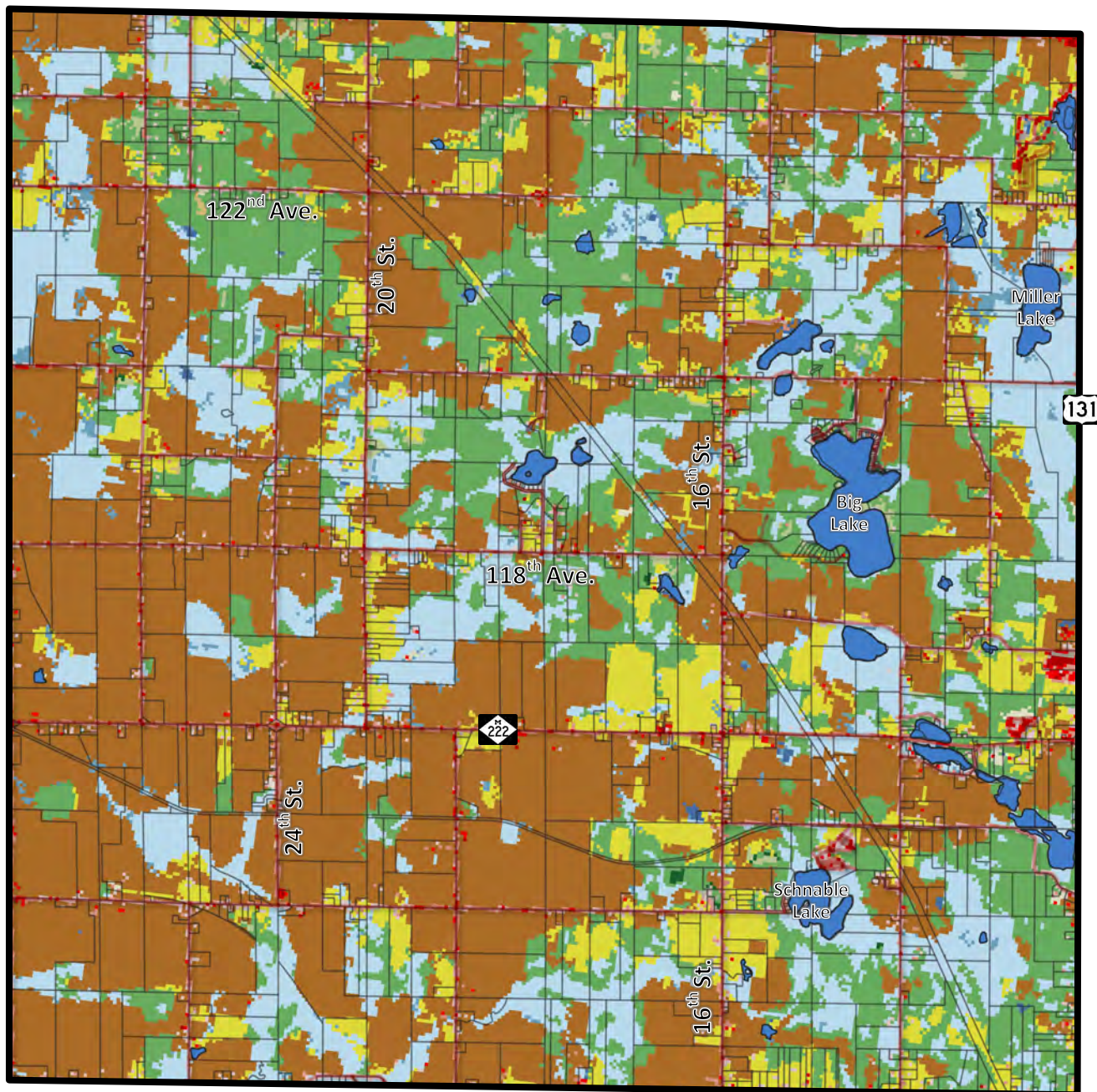


0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Source: MI Open Data Portal, USGS  
Allegan County GIS Data Library



# Map 2.4. Watson Township Land Cover



## LEGEND

### Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads
- Lakes

### Developed

- Dev., Open Space
- Dev., Low Intensity

- Dev., Medium Intensity
- Dev., High Intensity

### Barren

- Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)

### Forest

- Deciduous Forest

- Evergreen Forest
- Mixed Forest

### Shrubland/Herbaceous

- Dwarf Scrub
- Shrub/Scrub
- Grassland/Herbaceous

### Planted/Cultivated

- Pasture/Hay
- Cultivated Crops

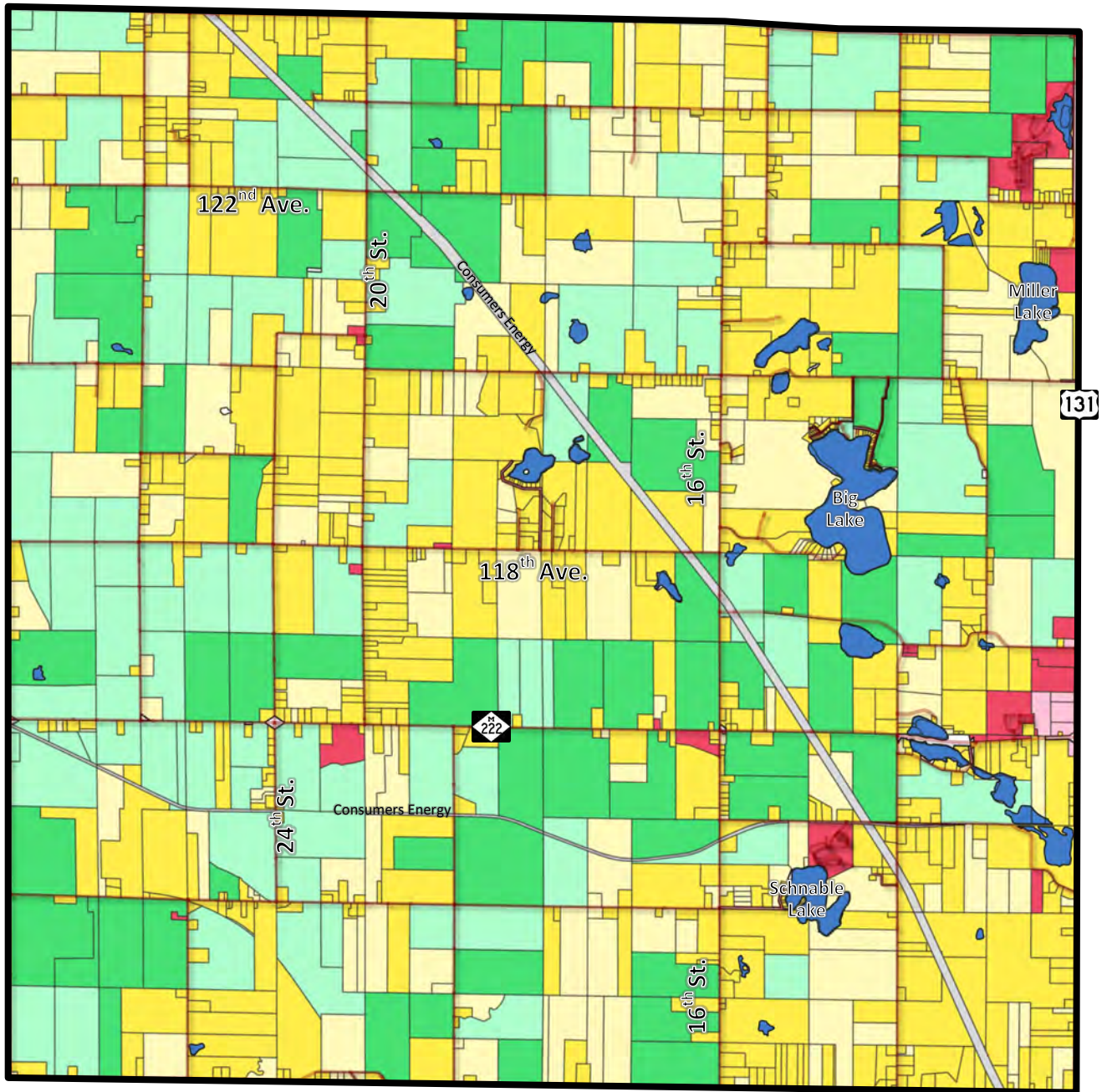
### Wetlands

- Woody Wetlands
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands

Source: NLCD, USGS



# Map 2.5. Watson Township Land Use



## LEGEND

### Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads
- Lakes

### Land Use

- Agriculture, Improved
- Agriculture, Vacant

- Commercial, Improved
- Commercial, Vacant
- Industrial, Vacant
- Residential, Improved
- Residential, Vacant
- Right-of-Way/Public



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Source: Allegan County GIS Data Library

# Demographics

## Population

Population trends have varied drastically over the past 50 years. While growth neared 25% between 1970 and 1980, this rate gradually declined until 2010, whereby a net population loss of one individual or approximately 0.05% composed the bottom of the trough, likely exacerbated by the effects of the 2008 housing crisis. Since 2010, however, the Township has been witnessing a slow return to population growth at 5.5%, suggesting a recovery from a decades-long decline and a change in perspective on development regulations. As West Michigan grows, Watson Township is likely to accumulate some new residents seeking escape from the urban buildup of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.

## Age

While Watson Township's age distribution does not necessarily lend itself to a typical "pyramid" distribution, rough peaks and troughs can still be identified: The largest cohorts in 2020 were those aged 55 to 65 years and 85 years or older with an overall median of 47.7 years. These numbers suggest that the near future will require greater attention to developing and maintaining recreational opportunities that are accessible and open to persons of all ages and abilities.

## Household Size

There were approximately 740 households in the Township in 2010. In 2020 the number of households increased to 758. The average household size was approximately 2.65 persons, slightly lower than the 2.88 persons per household in 2010. Likewise, the 2020 average family size was 2.86, down significantly from 3.22 in 2010. As of 2020, approximately 64% of the population 15 years and older was married, 12.8% separated, divorced, or widowed, and 23.4% never married.

## Education

Out of those persons 25 years and older in 2020, 48.2% had completed just four years of high school (or equivalent) while 29.2% had some college or an associate's degree and 15.6% had a college bachelor's degree or higher; Just 7.1% had less than a high school diploma or equivalent. By contrast, in 2010, 48.3% had completed just four years of high school (or equivalent) while 31.9% had some college or an associate's degree and 12.9% had a college bachelor's degree or higher; Just 6.9% had less than a high school diploma or equivalent. The high school education attainment rate in the Township (93.0%) is approximately two percentage points higher than the Allegan County as a whole (91.2%), but the bachelor's degree attainment level (15.6%) is approximately eight percent lower than the county average (23.6%).

## Income

The 2020 per capita income for Watson Township was \$28,062 and the percentage of people living in poverty was 12.7%; In 2010, the per capita income for Watson Township was \$24,984 (in 2020 dollars) and the poverty level was 11.2%. For comparison, the per capita income and poverty level for Allegan County in 2020 was \$30,057 in 2020 and \$27,426 in 2010. In 2010 and 2020 the Allegan County poverty levels stood at 16.3% and 13.5%, respectively. The poverty figures for both the Township and Allegan County are several percentage points lower than state average, which stood at 13.7%, in 2020 and 16.8% in 2010.



## Occupancy

In 2020, 713 of the Township's 758 occupied housing units were owner-occupied (94.1%) and 45 units were renter-occupied (5.9%). These figures are all numerically lower than their 2010 equivalents, but proportionately comparable: 775 of the Township's 820 occupied units were owner-occupied (94.5%) and still just 45 were renter-occupied (5.5%). In 2020, only 69 of the total 852 units were vacant (8.1%) while in 2010, 81 of the total 821 units were vacant (9.9%), indicating a marked improvement over the past decade. Generally, overall vacancy rates exceeding 5% begin to raise community stability as a concern; Rates exceeding 10% tend to correlate with communities experiencing problems of blight. For reference, the Allegan County vacancy rate was 12.1% in 2020 and 15.0% in 2010.

## Home Value

The median value of owner-occupied homes in 2020 was \$173,300 (2020 adjusted dollars). 22.9% of homes were valued at less than \$100,000; 16.3% percent between \$100,000 and \$149,999; 21.3% between \$150,000 and \$199,000, and 39.5% were over \$200,000. Among renters, the median monthly rent was \$627; Contrarily, in 2010 (2020 adjusted dollars), the median monthly rent was \$509, indicating a \$118 increase after adjusting for inflation.

## Employment

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2020 there were 1,002 persons 16 years and older in the Watson Township labor force out of 1,661 (3.0% unemployment); These same metrics in 2010 comprised 1,248 persons of 1,798 aged 16 years and older (5.6% unemployment). The 2020 census revealed that 83.6% of workers drive alone to work while just 10.8% carpool. Meanwhile, in 2020, just 1.2% walked to work and 2.8% worked from home while, in 2010, no workers reported walking and 4.9% worked from home, potentially influenced by the 2020 COVID-19 contact restrictions. The average commute time was 27.8 minutes—1.6 minutes longer than the 2010 average. These statistics reinforce Watson Township's ongoing characterization as a bedroom community wherein residents travel significant distances to work in other communities.

# 3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

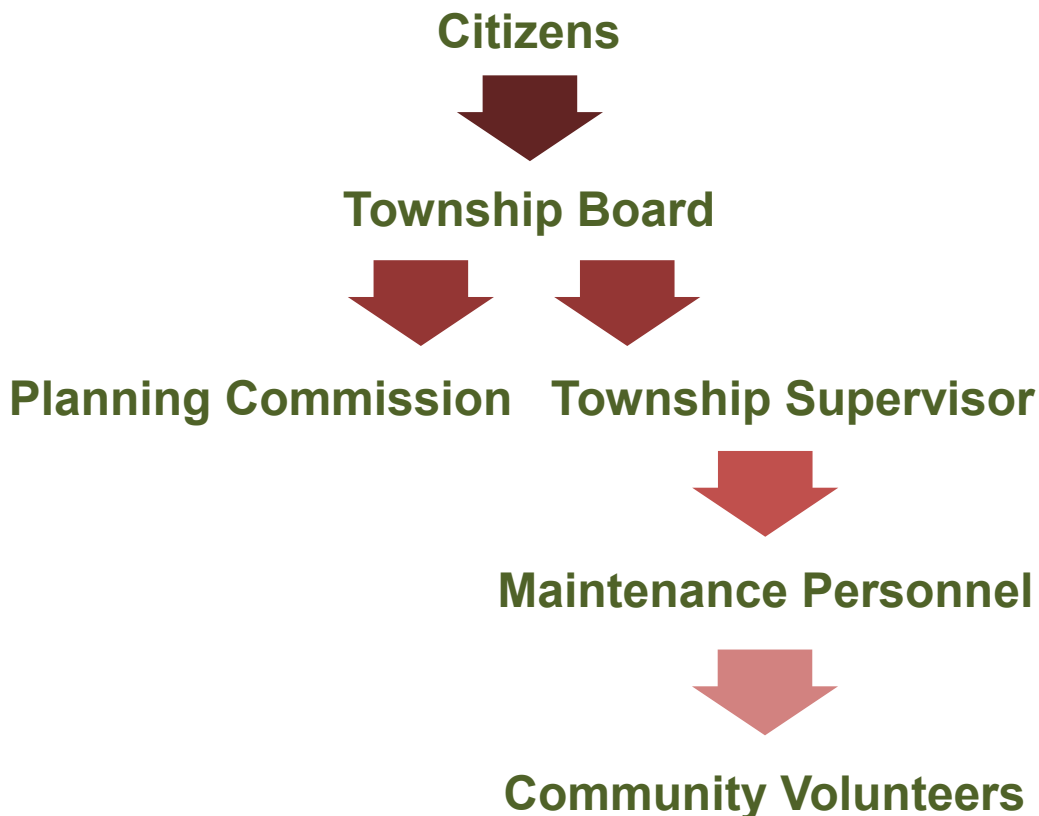
## Township Organization

The Watson Township Board is the primary decision-making body of the Township and is under direct authority of the public. The Board comprises five members elected by the citizens: the supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. The Board has ultimate authority to authorize the creation and management practices of parks, recreational facilities, and other quality-of-life amenities

The Planning Commission is directly responsible to the Township Board and the citizens of the Township. It comprises seven members nominated by the Township Supervisor and elected by the Township Board: the chair, vice chair, secretary, and three members. Per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, it also features two representatives from its sister bodies—the Township Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Both the Township Board and the Planning Commission are involved in the short- and long-range parks and open space planning process.

A visualization of the preceding explanation is included below.

**Figure 3.1. Watson Township Administrative Structure and Hierarchy Visualized**



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# 4

# FUNDING SOURCES

## Township Revenues

The Township's general fund will be the primary source of funds for operating and maintaining future park site improvements and in the acquisition and development of new lands. Consequently, recreation planning has to be coordinated with the yearly budget process for the Township general funds. Other types of local funding could include user fees, dedicated millage and the sale of bonds.

## Donations and Gifts

The availability of donated land, labor, equipment, and funds from individuals and organizations is an attractive and effective way to improve recreational opportunities. Such support should be proactively encouraged.

## Non-local Financial Assistance

Many communities seek outside sources of funds to supplement their local sources when providing recreational improvements. There are several programs administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) that can provide some financial assistance for local recreation projects.

The *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)* is a federally funded program administered by the MDNR. This program has provided funds on a 50/50 reimbursable matching basis for the development of outdoor recreational facilities. Funds are awarded for local projects after all project applications submitted in a year are evaluated. The local share of a project can be cash, pre-approved donations of services and materials, credit for certain locally assumed costs, or land donated after project approval. Established in 1964, it has an annual cap of \$900 million authorized by Congress. In most years, it has been underfunded but remains dedicated to outdoor recreational opportunities for all.

Another assistance program is the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, also administered by the MDNR. This program utilizes royalties from oil, gas, and other mineral developments on State-owned lands to help finance the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities. Any unit of government, including school districts, may apply for grants to develop or acquire land(s) for public recreational or resource protection purposes. Application forms are available online, along with current deadlines and requirements. The MDNR submits a list of recommended projects to the legislature each January and funds are available after legislative appropriation, usually the following fall. All local units of government must provide a local match of at least 25 percent of total project costs. There is no maximum grant request for acquisition projects. For development projects, the minimum is \$100,000 and the maximum is \$375,000. Proposals must be for outdoor recreation or resource protection purposes. Outdoor recreation support buildings or other facilities are eligible for development funding, as is the renovation of existing recreation facilities. All applicants must have a current MDNR-approved community recreation plan, documenting the need for project proposal.

In addition, any private individual may nominate land for public acquisition under this proposal. All nominations are reviewed by the MDNR for possible acquisition. The landowner is not required to be the person nominating a parcel of land for public acquisition. Nomination forms are available from the MDNR Recreation Division and may be submitted to the MDNR year round.

# Past Recreational Budget Amounts

**Table 4.1. Watson Township General Fund Budgets, 2016 – 2022**

Year	General Fund Budget	Current Facilities Maintenance Expenditures
2021-2022	\$302,950	\$10,000
2020-2021	\$324,213	\$9,700
2019-2020	\$247,300	\$9,700
2018-2019	\$232,050	\$9,700
2017-2018	\$269,170	\$9,698
2016-2017	\$218,850	\$9,700

The Watson Township Board has the authority to provide parks and recreational facilities and to acquire and regulate land for open space purposes. The Planning Commission's major role is in the overall physical planning of the Township. It also has a major responsibility in the implementation of open space objectives contained in the Township Master Plan through its land use policies and decisions.

The Planning Commission served tentatively as the Parks Commission as it oversaw the creation of the Township Parks and Recreation Plan. Since adoption of the Plan on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, however, the role has been filled by the Township Board. No

separate body has yet been created for this purpose, but the Township Board reserves the right to do so should the needs of the Township parks and recreational facilities demand it. Nonetheless, Township residents and interest groups maintain a direct influence on each body as all meetings are open to the public and all decisions are subject to public scrutiny and input.

At the present time, the maintenance of all Township grounds including the Township Hall, cemeteries, and fire station is handled by a third party contractor as approved by the Township Board annually. The facilities maintenance expenditures in Table 4.1 above refer to each fiscal year's winning bid for facility maintenance. These costs are included to provide an analogous comparison of what current grounds maintenance comprise as the Township moves forward with the goal of improving and maintaining both existing recreational assets and the proposed Watson Township Park.

Currently, there is no single staff person that is charged with the administration of Township policies relative to parks and recreation. This responsibility is shared by the Township Board and community volunteers.

As the Township's parks and recreational needs begin to take on more complexity, this plan recognizes that parks and recreation administrative staff needs will grow. This function will continue to be carried out by the elected Township personnel, appointed staff, and volunteers for an indefinite period.

# 5 INVENTORY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The following chapter is an inventory of the public, semi-public, and private recreational facilities within and near Watson Township that are available to Township residents. Facilities are categorized as either local or regional, public or private, and owned/maintained by the Township.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Per the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines, an assessment of the accessibility of each park to people with disabilities is required in this recreation plan. The assessment considers the accessibility of the facilities themselves and the access routes to them. The accessibility grading system is based on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a five-point system as defined in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1. MDNR Accessibility Grading System**

Accessibility Grade	Definition
1	None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3	Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5	The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

## LOCAL FACILITIES

Local recreation areas are located only within the Watson Township borders. The following section and tables include properties maintained by Watson Township, public facilities, and private/semi-private facilities.

### Township Hall

The Watson Township Hall, built in 1955, has been a cornerstone of the community, serving as the meeting place for local officers and residents alike. Rentals are available to the public for various events and free for non-profit groups, clubs, organizations, and funeral luncheons.

The Township Hall also historically hosted community recycling bins, allowing residents the opportunity to properly recycle goods. In 2022, the Township joined the Allegan County Resource Recovery Program (ACRRP) and has since been offering curbside recycling pickup.

The building is shared with the Hopkins Area Fire Department as the Watson Station (Station #2). The facility was expanded in 2022 following an increase in resources and equipment. This resulted in an increased fire coverage that now services all of Big Lake and other property on the Township's east side.



Watson Township Hall/Hopkins Area Fire Department Station 2, 2022.



## Future Watson Township Park

The Future Watson Township Park is proposed to be the first public park in the Township of any public entity. To be developed on nearly 30 acres of Township property near the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and M-222, the site is intended to become a community-wide gathering place to fill certain roles that other quasi-public or private facilities like the Township Hall or various campgrounds cannot.

Ground was initially broken in 2022, but further amenities are to be determined at a later date according to available funds, resources, and input from the Watson Township Parks and Master Plan Survey and public input workshop. Initial discussion, however, included the following suggestions:

- Picnic tables and benches
- Gazebo and pavilions
- Various sports fields and courts
- Walking, biking, and running trails
- Disc golf course



*Future Watson Township Park (7 Generations Park) current conditions (above), 2022.*

**Table 5.2. Local Public Facilities**

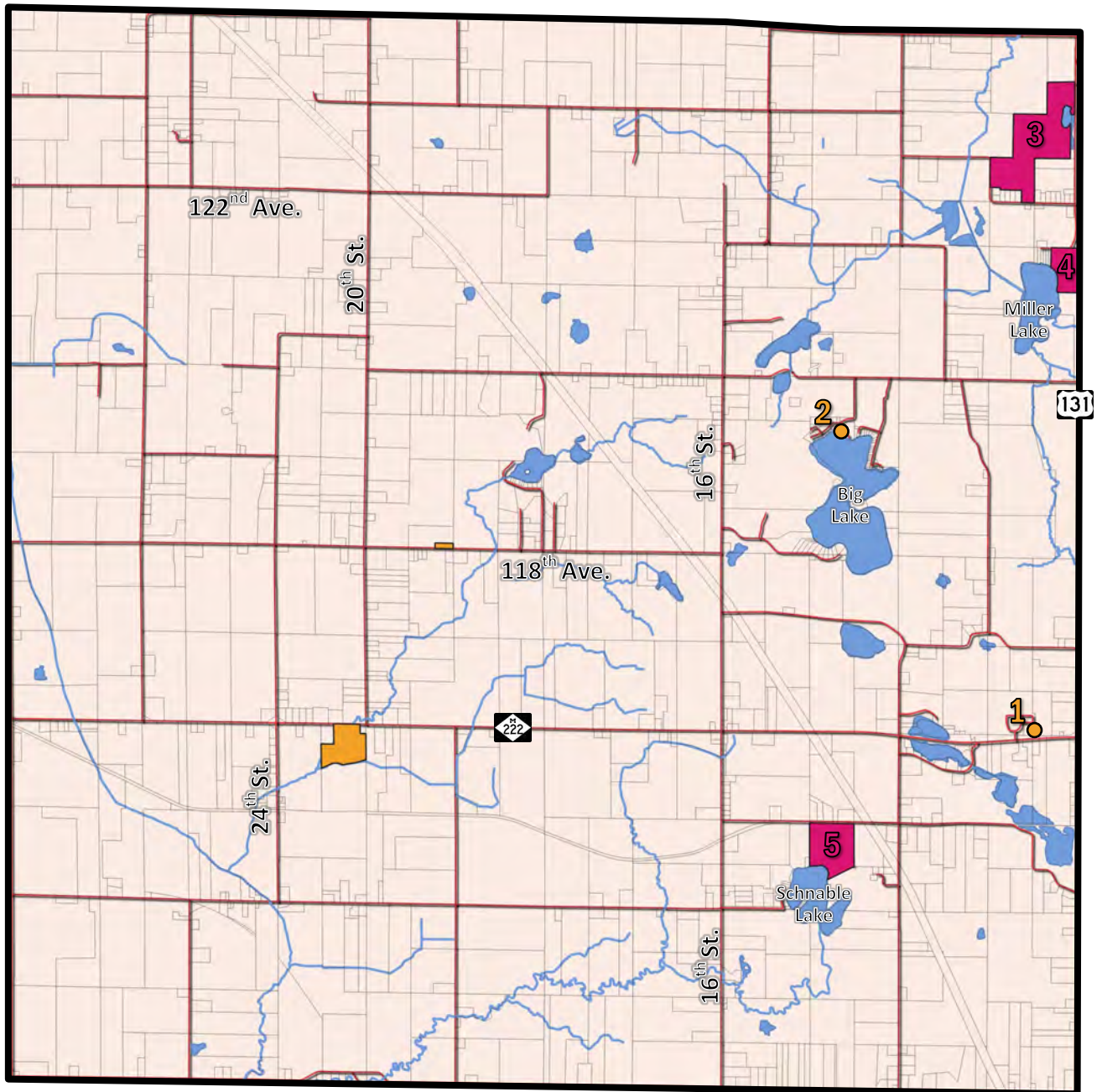
Owner/Operator	Facility	Acreage	Amenities
<b>Michigan Department of Natural Resources</b>	1. Allegan County Snowmobile Trail, Nearest Trailhead (Watson Township)	–	Trailhead parking, 98 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in season
	2. Big Lake DNR Boat Ramp	5.2	Boat Ramp (north side of Big Lake), pit toilet, lakeside parking
<b>Watson Township</b>	3. Future Watson Township Park	30.0	TBD
	4. Watson Township Hall	2.1	Rentable indoor public space for community gatherings, events

**Table 5.3. Local Private/Semi-Private Facilities**

Owner/Operator	Facility	Acreage	Amenities
<b>Hidden Ridge AN RV Community, LLC</b>	3. Hidden Ridge RV Resort (Watson Township)	98.5	RV camping, cabin rental, flush toilets/showers, laundry, picnic area, swimming pool, splash pad, beach access, lake fishing, playground, jumping pillow, basketball, pickleball, volleyball, horseshoes, boat rentals, biking, hiking, kayaking, planned activities.
<b>William Louis Cole Rev Liv Trust</b>	4. Miller Lake Campground (Watson Township)	21.3	Tent and RV camping, flush toilets/showers, boat ramp, boat rental, lake swimming, horseshoes, volleyball, playground equipment, lake fishing
<b>Scott and Kathy Rex</b>	5. Schnable Lake Family Campground (Watson Township)	42.5	RV Camping, cabin rentals, flush toilets, showers, laundry, lake fishing, lake swimming, splash pad, playground



# Map 5.1. Local Facilities



## LEGEND

Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads
- Lakes
- Local Facilities, All



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Source: MI Open Data Portal, USGS  
Allegan County GIS Data Library

# REGIONAL FACILITIES

Regional recreation areas are located within 10 miles from the center of Watson Township. Public and private/semi-private facilities are listed in the following tables.

**Table 5.4. Regional Public Facilities**

Owner/operator	Location	Acreage	Amenities
<b>Allegan County Agricultural Society</b>	1. Allegan County Fairgrounds (City of Allegan)	98.0	Campsites
<b>Allegan Public Schools</b>	2. Allegan High School	38.9	Sports fields, indoor pool and aquatic center; track
	3. Alternative High School	2.40	Sports fields, playgrounds
	4. Dawson Elementary	7.9	Playground equipment, softball field
	5. LE White Middle School	112.8	Sports fields, tennis courts
	6. North Ward Elementary	14.2	Playground equipment, softball field
	7. Pine Trails Elementary	35.5	Playground equipment, softball field
	8. West Ward Elementary	9.4	Playground equipment, softball field
<b>City of Allegan</b>	9. Allegan Wellness and Sports Complex (Allegan Township)	49.4	Picnic tables and shelter, drinking water, flush toilets, hiking trails, Baseball, Softball, Soccer and open fields, and playground equipment
	10. Hanson Park	1.6	
	11. Mahan Park	0.5	Picnic tables, drinking water, pit toilets, river fishing
	12. Mill District Park	0.7	River fishing
	13. Riverfront Park	0.2	Picnic tables, River fishing, hiking trail
	14. Rossman Esplanade Park	3.1	Picnic tables, tennis court
	15. Trestle Trail Park	1.4	Bicycle trail, hiking trail
<b>City of Otsego</b>	16. Brookside Park	42.0	Rustic Camping, Picnic tables and shelter, and grills, drinking water, flush toilets, boat launch, river fishing, hiking trails, nature study and playground equipment
	17. Memorial Park	21.1	Picnic tables and shelter, drinking water, flush toilets, baseball and softball fields, basketball court, horseshoe pit, playground, open field, tennis court, sand volleyball court
	18. Northside Park	4.3	Picnic tables and shelter, picnic grills, basketball court, ice skating, playground, open field
<b>Hopkins Public Schools</b>	19. LM Wise Educational Preserve (Hopkins Township)	53.9	Pit toilets, hiking trail, nature study
	20. Hopkins Elementary	38.6	Playground equipment, sports fields
	21. Hopkins High School	8.44	Sports fields
	22. Hopkins Middle School	7.09	Sports fields

**Table 5.4 (continued). Regional Public Facilities**

Owner/operator	Location	Acreage	Amenities
Hopkins Township	23. Hilliards Park	5.2	Picnic tables, drinking water, pit toilets, baseball fields and playground equipment
Martin Public Schools	24. Brandon Elementary	29.81	Playground equipment
	25. Martin Middle/High School		Sports fields, outdoor track
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	26. Miner Lake Boating Access Site (Allegan Township)	2.7	Pit Toilets, boat Launch, lake fishing
	27. Pine Creek Boating Access Site (Otsego Township)	0.7	Pit toilets, boat launch, lake fishing
	28. Selkirk Boating Access Site (Wayland Township)	5.0	Pit toilets, boat launch, lake fishing
Otsego Public Schools	29. Alamo Elementary (Alamo Township, Barry County)	19.92	Playground equipment, sports fields
	30. Dix Street Elementary	9.39	Playground equipment, sports fields
	31. Otsego High School	105.32	Sports fields, tennis courts, outdoor track
	32. Otsego Middle School		Basketball courts
	33. Washington Street Elementary		Playground equipment
Village of Hopkins	34. Hopkins Village Park	1.4	Picnic tables
	35. North Park	6.1	Picnic tables and shelter, picnic grills, drinking water, flush toilets, fitness trail, softball fields, basketball court, playground equipment, soccer and open fields
Village of Martin	36. Memorial Park	0.9	

**Table 5.5. Regional Private/Semi-Private Facilities**

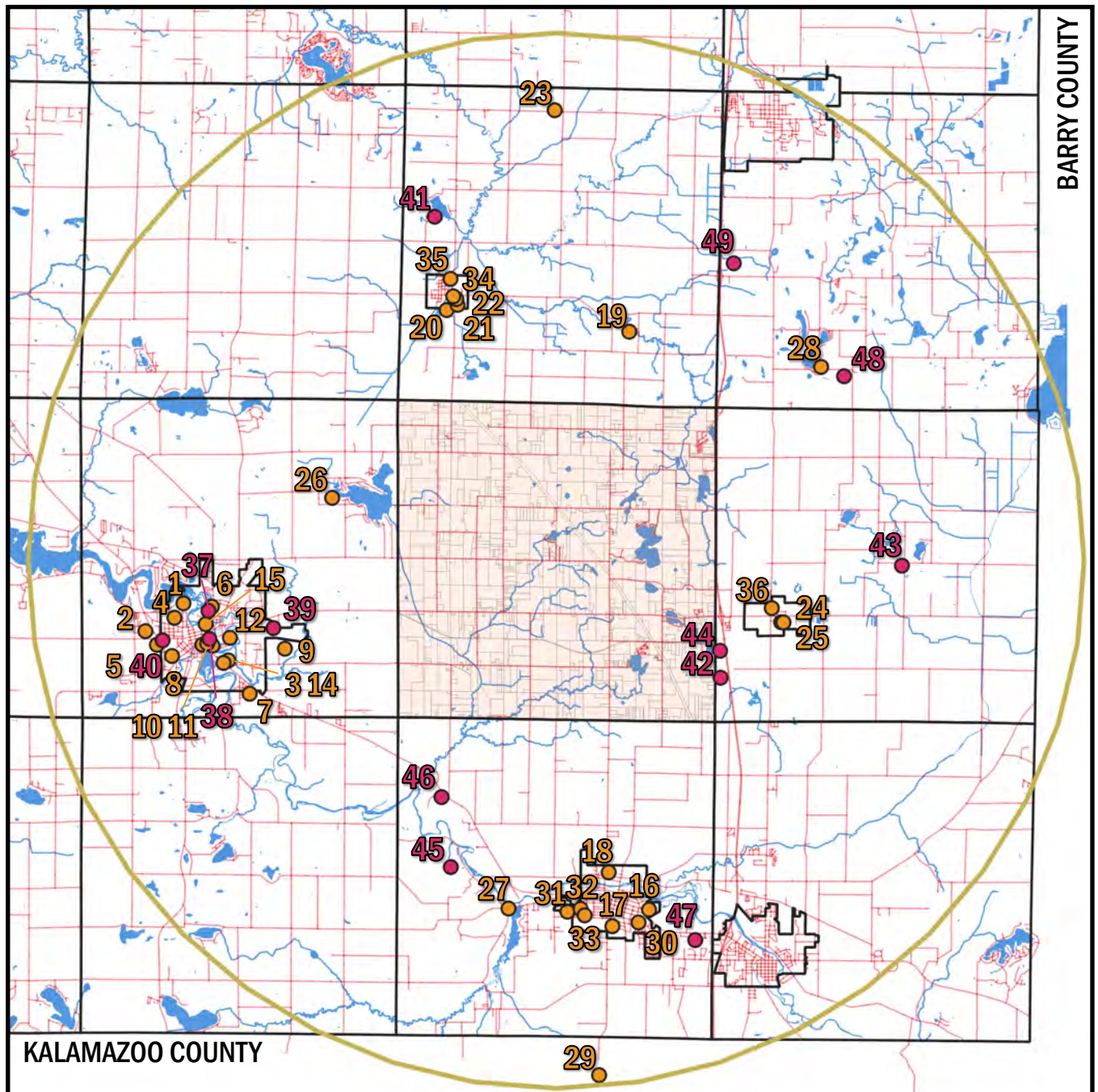
Owner/operator	Location	Acreage	Amenities
1443133 Ontario, Inc.	42. US 131 Motorsports Park (Martin Township)	160.7	Limited RV Camping, flush toilets, special events
Allegan Event, LLC	37. Allegan Event (City of Allegan)	13,000 sf	Indoor ropes courses, climbing walls, cross-river zipline
City of Allegan	38. The Old Regent Theatre (City of Allegan)	5,175 sf	Movie theatre, concessions
Skydive, Inc. Allegan	39. Skydive Allegan (City of Allegan)	–	Skydiving lessons
Snowden's Sunset Lanes, LLC	40. Snowden's Sunset Lanes (City of Allegan)	13,825 sf	Bowling, pro shop, lessons
Miller's East Lake Resort, LLC	41. East Lake Campground (Hopkins Township)	27.1	Tent and RV camping, cabin rental, flush toilets/showers, laundry, boat launch, boat rentals, lake fishing, lake swimming, playground, basketball, volleyball, shuffleboard, planned activities

**Table 5.5 (continued). Regional Private and Semi-Private Facilities**

<b>Owner/operator</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Amenities</b>
<b>East Martin Christian Schools</b>	43. East Martin Christian Elementary (Martin Township)	5.2	Playground equipment
<b>Jaystev, LLC</b>	44. Martin MX Motocross Park (Martin Township)	41.49	Two motocross tracks for adult and junior riders
<b>Bittersweet Ski Resort, Inc.</b>	45. Bittersweet Ski Resort (Otsego Township)	127.9	Skiing, snowboarding, rentals and lessons
<b>Lynx Golf View, LLC</b>	46. Lynx Golf Course (Otsego Township)	165.5	Golfing, cart rental, pro shop, banquet center
<b>Moore Theatres</b>	47. M-89 Cinema (Otsego Township)	24,600 sf	Movie theatre, concessions
<b>Leatherman &amp; Vander Velde</b>	48. Orchard Hills Golf Course (Wayland Township)	187.3	Golfing, cart rentals, driving range, lessons, pro shop, banquet center
<b>Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians</b>	49. Gun Lake Casino (Wayland Township)	174,675 sf	Casino, event center



# Map 5.2. Regional Facilities



## LEGEND

### Base Content

- Parcels
- Roads
- Lakes
- 10-mile radius, Watson Township center

Regional Facilities, Public

Regional Facilities, Private



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

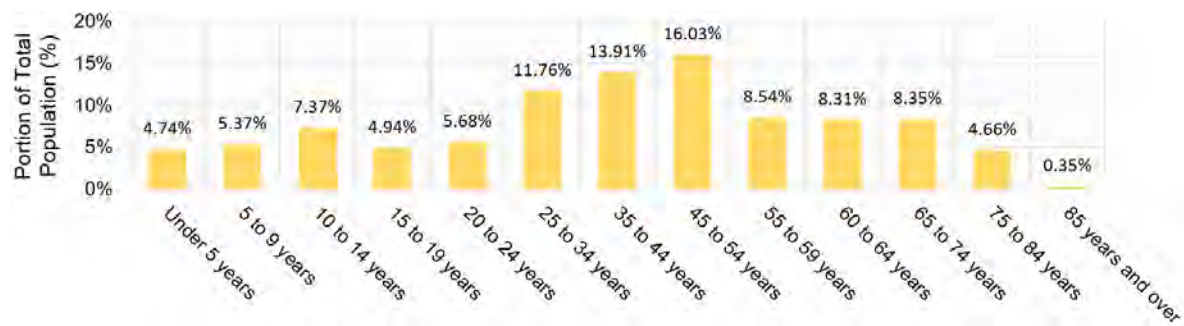
Source: MI Open Data Portal, USGS  
Allegan County GIS Data Library

# OTHER INFLUENCES AND CONCLUSIONS

The need for recreational facilities and open space varies considerably between communities and regions due to many factors, the most significant of which include the population age, density, and the availability of existing private, public, and school recreation and open space facilities in the area.

In 2020, the Census-recorded population of the Township was 2,176. Figure 5.1 below displays residents’ age distribution as identified in the 2023 Watson Township Master Plan, providing useful data for Township efforts to provide accessible and age-appropriate recreational amenities. The largest estimated age demographic (16.03%) is people 45 – 54 years old.

Figure 5.1. Watson Township Age Distribution, 2020



Source: 2020 Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau.

The average population density in Watson Township is approximately 61 people per square mile, the lowest in the area and below the state average of 177 residents per square mile. The next lowest density area in this region is Martin (Township and Village averaged) with an average density of 84.5 residents per square mile.

The following table compares the number of select activities recommended, and those available for Township residents based upon standards developed by the National Recreation and park Association, as adopted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.\*

Table 5.6. Recreation Standards and Deficiencies Inventory (2022, Outdoor Only)

Facility Type	Standard Number <sup>1</sup>	Recommended facilities	Existing Facilities		Deficiencies	
			Local	Regional	Local	Regional
Baseball (adult)	1 : 5,000	1	0	3	1	0
Baseball (youth)	1 : 5,000	1	0	3	1	0
Basketball	1 : 5,000	1	1	5	0	0
Picnic Shelters	1 : 2,000	1	0	5	1	0
Softball (adult and youth may use same field)	1 : 5,000	1	0	7	1	0
Tennis	1 : 2,000	1	0	4	1	0
Trails	1 system per region	1	–	1	–	0
Volleyball	1 : 5,000	1	2	2	0	0
Totals:			3	30	5	0

\*As recommended in Appendix C of "Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans", Michigan Department of Natural Resources, published 11/20/2018.

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# 6 PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

The following section illustrates the feedback gathered from citizens and stakeholders of Watson Township through several outreach methods. A community survey entitled the *Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey* was made available online on March 29, 2022, comprising twenty-two (22) questions regarding demographics and preferences for use in the development of both the draft Township Master Plan and this plan, jointly. The survey was distributed and open for 115 days, acquiring sixty (60) responses and closing on June 29, 2022.

The draft Plan became available for public review and comment on \_\_\_\_\_, 2022, whereby it was published in the locally circulated [MLive or ACN] and posted to the Watson Township website with instructions for submitting feedback.

The results of these input devices are included below.

## Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey

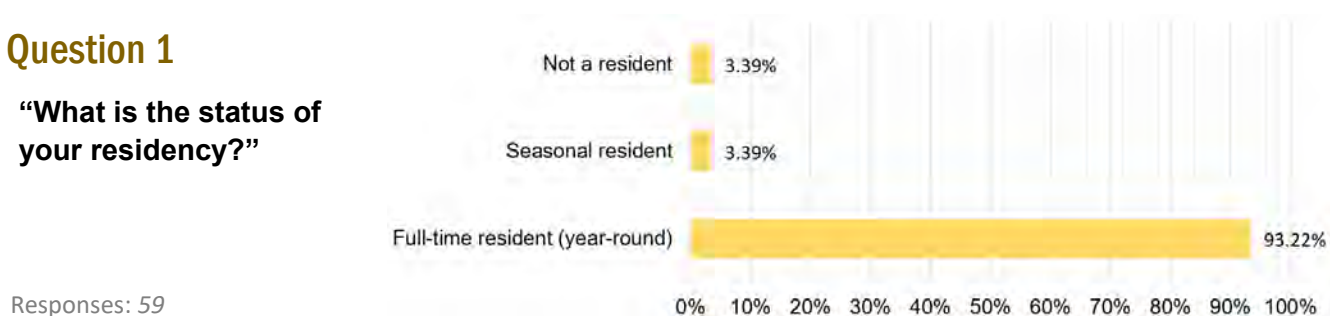
### Demographics (1 – 9)

The first section of the survey (Questions 1 – 9) is intended to collect information about the types of people who respond to the survey. Knowing which demographics and groups are sharing their opinions will help the Township determine what certain stakeholders and cohorts are interested in and better align priorities accordingly.

Questions 1 and 2 below reveal that the overwhelming majority of respondents (93.22%) are full-time residents of the Township living in a relatively even distribution throughout the Township's four quadrants (Question 2 cont., Figure 7.1 on the following page). However, the Township's two eastern quadrants are home to approximately 25.42% more respondents than its western quadrants, indicating a potential population distribution favoring the Township's eastern half.

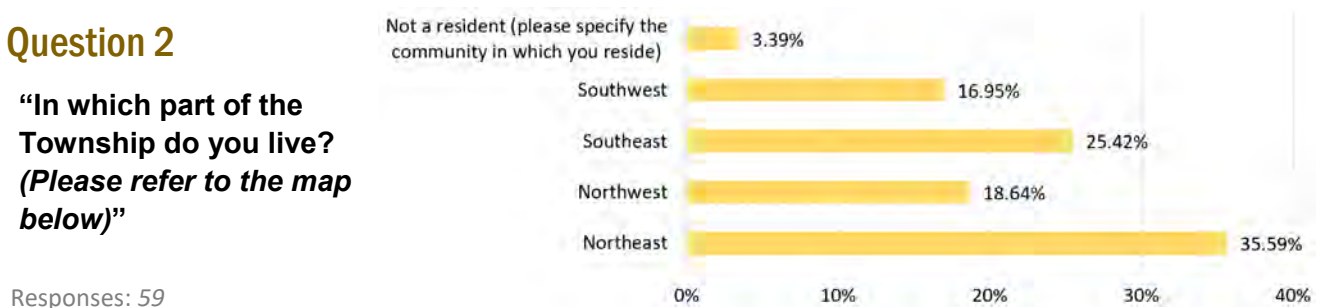
### Question 1

**“What is the status of your residency?”**



### Question 2

**“In which part of the Township do you live? (Please refer to the map below)”**

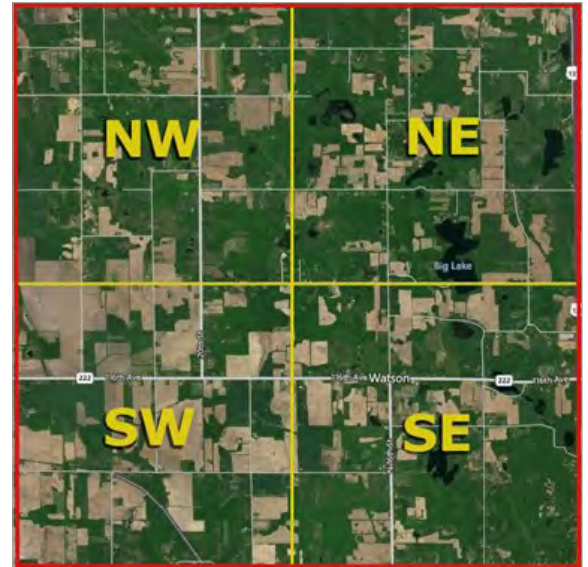




## Question 2 cont., Figure 6.1

**Watson Township Quadrants Map** as used in Question 2 of the Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey to help respondents identify where within the Township, if applicable, they live.

Questions 3 through 5 below indicate the longevity of respondents' connection to Watson Township. The overwhelming majority of participants are over the age of 35 (93.22%), with 30.51% alone being between the ages of 55 and 64. This participant age distribution mimics the Township-wide distribution as recoded in U.S. Census data for the year 2020, in which the median Township age is identified to be 47.7 years (2023 Watson Township Master Plan, Ch. 2)

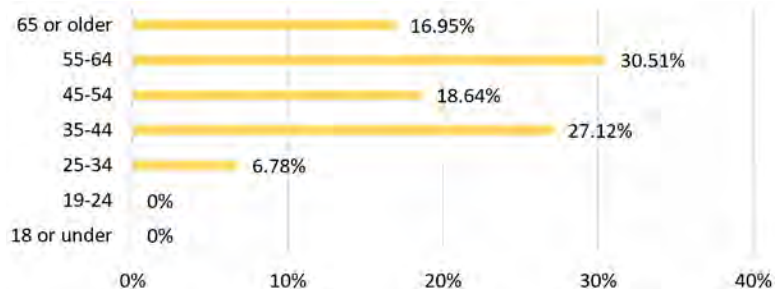


The Township's age distribution is complemented by the length of time resident respondents have lived within the Township—a skewed slope indicating most participants (37.29%) have lived in the Township for more than 25 years, descending with each interval of fewer years. Expectedly, most participants also noted that they had no plans to move out of the Township in the next five years. The results of these questions further reinforce the known character of Watson Township as an established community of long-time residents.

## Question 3

**“What is your age?”**

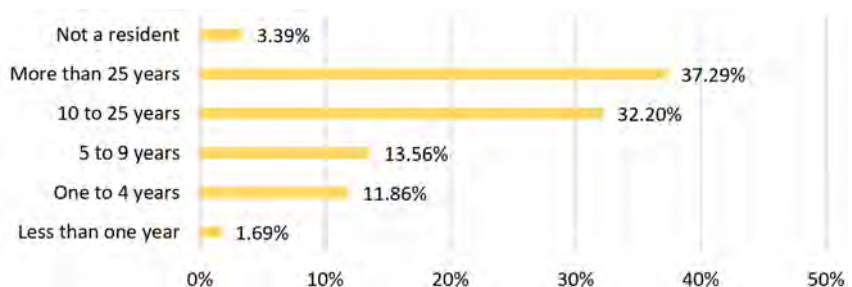
Responses: 59



## Question 4

**“How long have you lived in Watson Township?”**

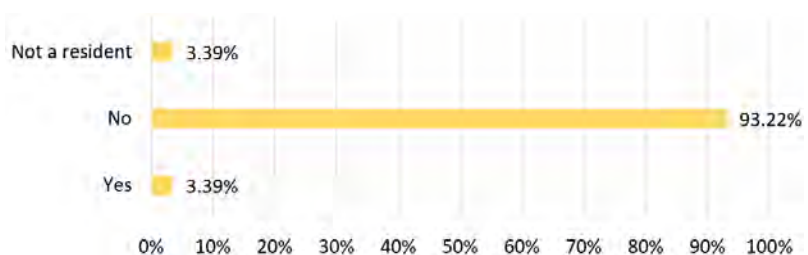
Responses: 59



## Question 5

**“In the next five years do you expect to move out of Watson Township?”**

Responses: 59



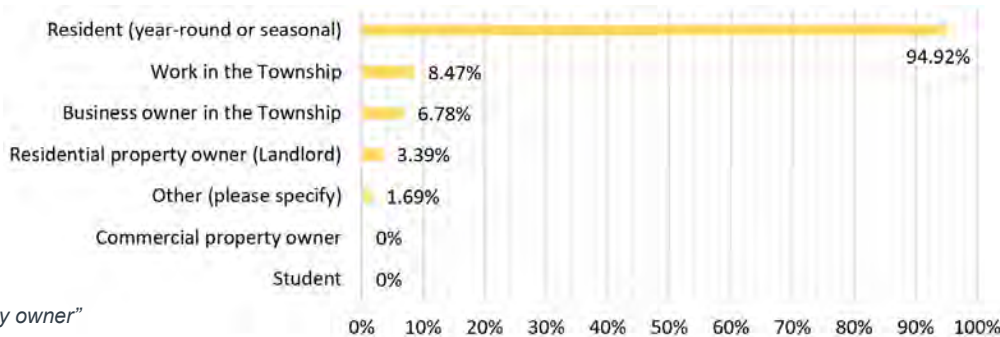
Questions 6 through 8 serve to better exhibit the living, working, and capital conditions of survey participants such that recreational prospects can be better attuned to the desires of the community. In Question 6, residents were asked to check all answers that apply to them. As such, 94.92% of responses indicated that they are year-round residents. However, only a combined 15.25% work or own businesses in the Township. Even fewer identify as residential property owners (landlords) at 3.39% and no respondents identified as commercial property owners or students. The contrast between those living and working in the Township implies that a large number of respondents either live in the Township but work elsewhere, are retired, or are otherwise unemployed. The otherwise lack of landlords and commercial property owners likewise correlates to the lack of commercially and industrially zoned property within the Township and very low rental rate (Question 8).

Question 7 reveals that nearly all participants (96.61%) live in traditional single-family homes—mostly on properties five acres or more (44.07%), while 3.39% live in manufactured homes. This distribution correlates with U.S. Census Data from 2020 indicating 82.2% of housing units within the Township are single-unit, detached dwellings—many of which are likely to be old, established farmsteads (*2022–2027 Watson Township Master Plan*, pg. 39).

Question 8 further reinforces this theory by revealing that nearly all respondents own their own homes (98.31%).

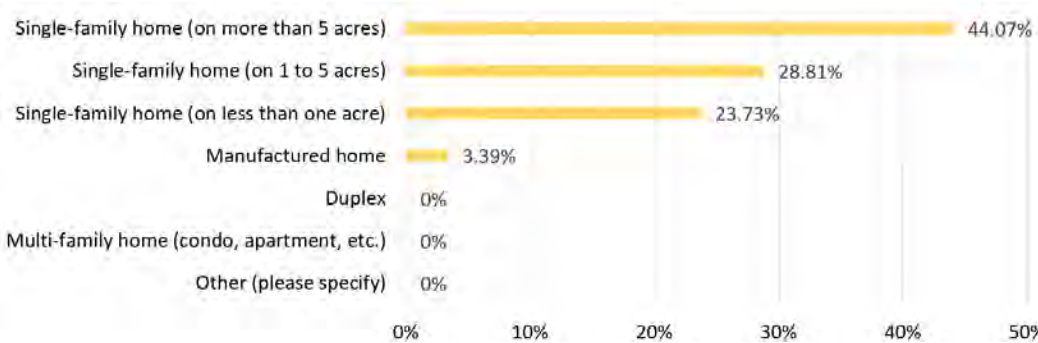
**Question 6**  
“Which of the following best characterizes your connection to Watson Township

Other Responses: “property owner”



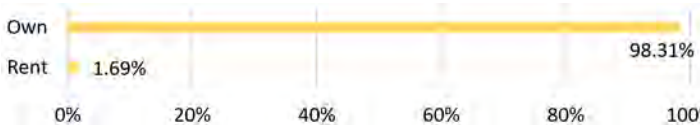
Responses: 59

**Question 7**  
“In what type of dwelling do you live?”



Responses: 59

**Question 8**  
“Do you own or rent your home?”



Responses: 59



Question 9 below provides insight into respondents' primary place of work. Gathering data on workplaces can help identify key travel routes, corridors, and access points through which working residents frequent Watson Township. These features can then be considered in discussing where residents are currently finding recreational opportunities and where Watson Township may wish to provide recreational opportunities in the future.

The most populous answer among respondents is that they primarily work in the metropolitan Grand Rapids area at 20.34%, almost completely matched by those who are retired at 18.64%. Those who travel north for work are likely to get there via US-131 at either 116<sup>th</sup> or 124<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The third largest cohort identified their primary workplace as the City of Allegan at 13.56%, likely commuting via US-222. The next largest response, Other, is detailed in the *Other responses* section below. The Otsego-Plainwell area, Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area, and Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County responses, however, constitute a combined 20.33% of all respondents, nearly matching the number of Grand Rapids area respondents. This group represents those who drive south for their primary place of work—again likely taking US-131 at the above-mentioned entrances.

Finally, only 5.08% of respondents noted that they primarily work from home and no respondents noted that they work in Watson Township, but not from home. This distribution aligns with that exhibited in Question 6 on the previous page, whereby fewer than ten percent identified as working within Watson Township either from home or elsewhere. Forty percent of all respondents going far north or south for work regularly can have large implications on the location of existing out-of-Township recreational assets and future in-Township projects such as visibility, traffic patterns, representation of the community, accessibility, and ease of maintenance.

## Question 9

**“What is your primary place of work?”**

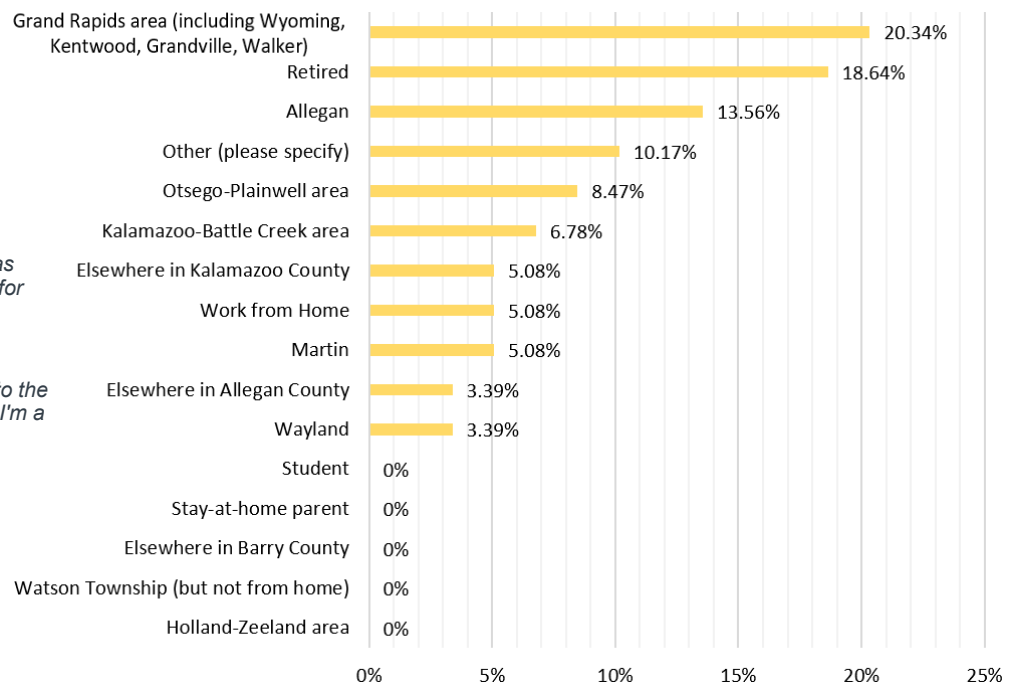
### Other Responses:

*“Don’t see this as significant data for survey”*

*“Hopkins”*

*“Grand Rapids to the south of K-zoo. I’m a realtor”*

*“Otr”*



Responses: 59

## Opinions (10 – 16)

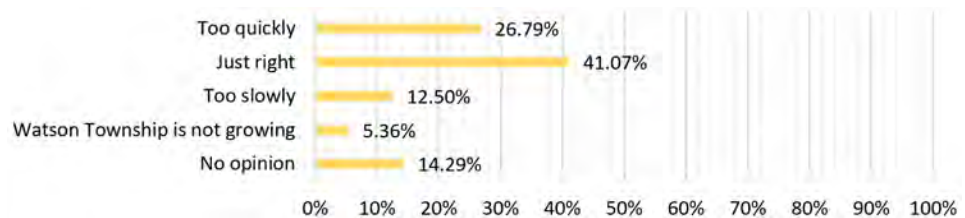
This section is intended to gather information about how respondents feel about and perceive Watson Township. Input collected in this section can be used to determine what aspects of Watson Township are most and least enjoyed, where respondents are going to find essentials and activities, and how Watson Township can better facilitate and assist in residents seeking recreation.

Questions 10 and 11 implore respondents' opinions on Watson Township development. On the subject of whether the community is growing or shrinking and how fast, most respondents note that Watson Township is growing just right (41.07%), followed by those who feel it is growing too quickly (26.79%); Only one-eighth of participants feel it is growing too slowly (12.50%), and just 5.36% do not think the Township is growing.

Likewise, most respondents have no opinion either way on the Township's efforts to guide this development (47.27%). The answers to Question 11 are distributed in a normal curve with a slight skew toward a good opinion. The results of these two questions can be interpreted as a community currently interested in maintaining its historic trajectory and uninterested in large-scale growth. Such a community is likely to prefer recreational opportunities of a rural, low impact nature that complements the current character of the Township, rather than any highly developed, cultivated recreational areas.

## Question 10

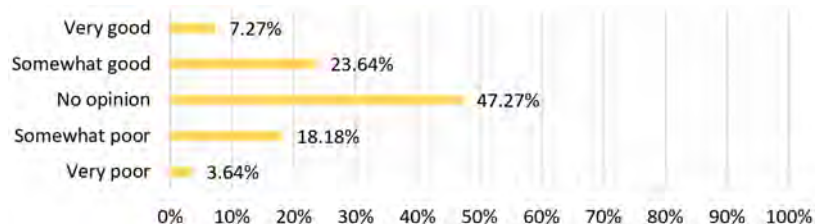
**“In your opinion, Watson Township is growing:”**



Responses: 56

## Question 11

**“In your opinion, Watson Township's efforts to guide growth and development have been:”**



Responses: 55

Question 12 on the following page details participants responses to the question of where they are most likely to go for entertainment, groceries, and recreation.

The distribution for entertainment (i.e. bars, restaurants, movies, etc.) skewed slightly toward both the Otsego-Plainwell area and the metropolitan Grand Rapids area at 34.55% and 27.27%, respectively. These two communities are largely accessible via US-131, reinforcing its significance as a connecting corridor for Watson Township. Further evidence includes the third highest category, the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area, at 16.36%, putting these north and south communities at a cumulative 78.18% of all responses.

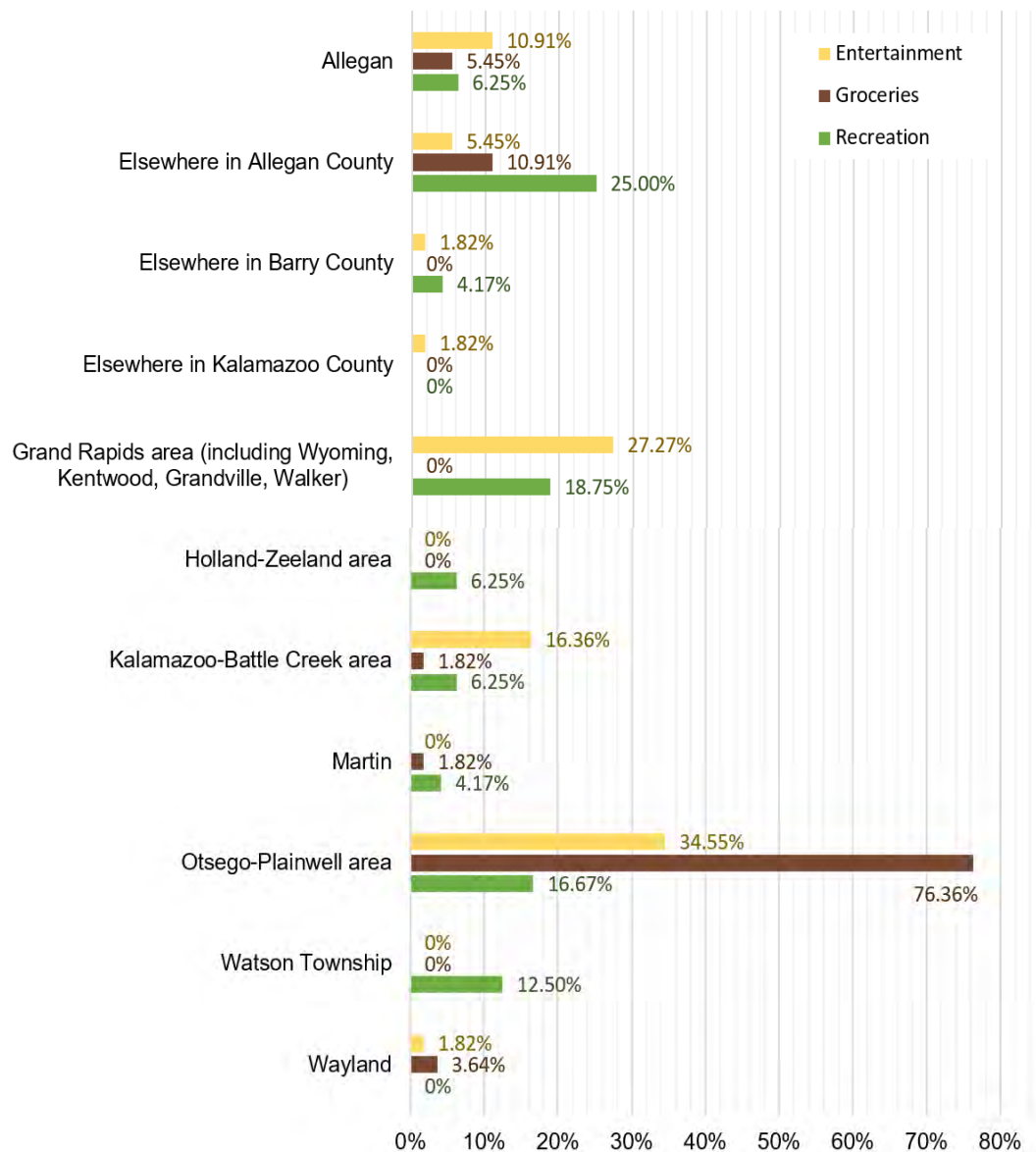
The distribution for groceries skews even more than entertainment, with the Otsego-Plainwell area accounting for over three-fourths (76.36%) of all responses. As groceries are a commodity more likely to be bought before or after work than entertainment and recreation services, this metric can be expected to better correlate with primary places of work than the other two prompts. However, the Otsego-Plainwell area only accounts for the primary workplace of 8.47% of respondents, while being the primary source of groceries for 76.36% of respondents. Even including the percentages of participants identifying as retired, stay-at-home parents, and work-from-home employees with those who work in Otsego or Plainwell, there remains a 44.17% discrepancy in the proportions. The results of this question may be interpreted to identify Otsego and Plainwell as a significant area for Watson Township residents as the nearest urbanized community with big box stores and complementary businesses. Recognizing the importance of this relationship can highlight some

opportunities for recreational connectivity between Watson Township and such significant neighboring communities through potential assets like snowmobile, ORV, and bike trails.

Lastly, the distribution for recreational preference (i.e. winter sports, fishing, hunting, biking, etc.) is the most even of all three prompts, with a majority identifying areas other than those listed within Allegan County as their most likely destination for recreation. As essentially all bodies of water, ORV trails, state forestland, and private hunting property in Allegan County are outside city limits, likely explaining said majority. However, the second and third most popular locations were the metropolitan Grand Rapids area and the Otsego-Plainwell areas at 18.75% and 16.67%, further reinforcing the significance of these US-131 communities in connection to Watson Township. Knowing where Watson Township stakeholders are currently deciding to spend their recreational time can help identify what aspects of outdoor recreation the Township may wish to incorporate into its own community. The abundance of those choosing rural places in Allegan County indicates a potential favorability toward the natural, wilderness-related types of recreational opportunities.

## Question 12

**“Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?”**



Responses: 56

Question 13 on the following consists of seventeen (17) subquestions asking participants their opinion on various aspects of Watson Township. Similarly to Question 11 on page 28, subquestions are answered on a five (5)-step scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Each subquestion features the weighted average of all answers, indicating either a very strongly aligned reaction, an

even distribution, or symmetrical polarization to any given aspect of the Township. This weighted average is then broken down by stratified bar graphs as seen in every previous question thus far.

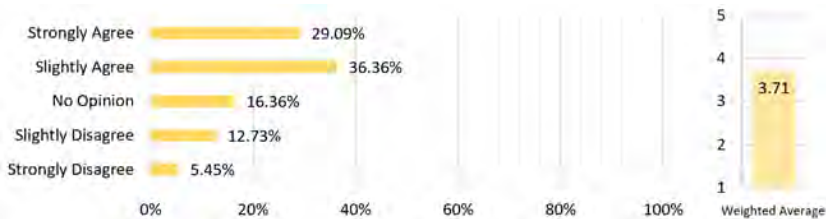
## Question 13

“How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Watson Township?”

### Question 13.1

“Traffic congestion”

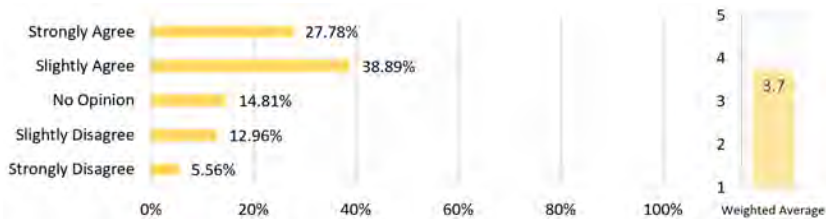
Responses: 55



### Question 13.2

“Traffic speeds”

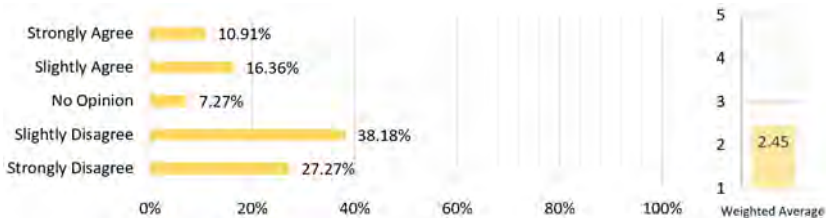
Responses: 54



### Question 13.3

“Public road quality”

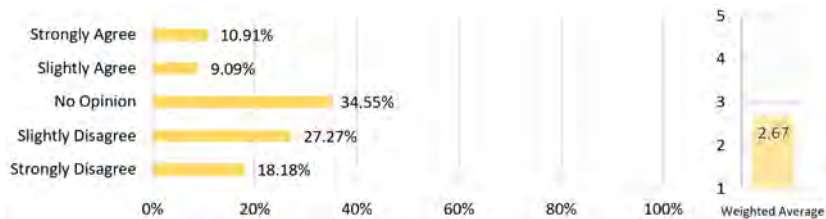
Responses: 55



### Question 13.4

“Number of bike trails/  
paved shoulders”

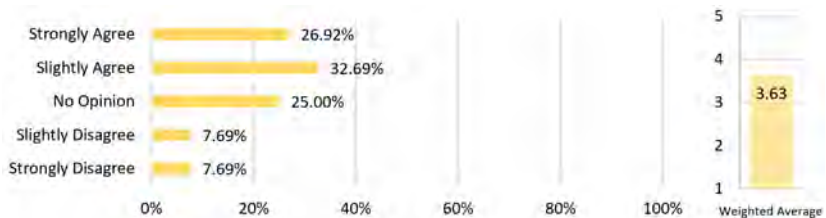
Responses: 55



### Question 13.5

“Quality of groundwater”

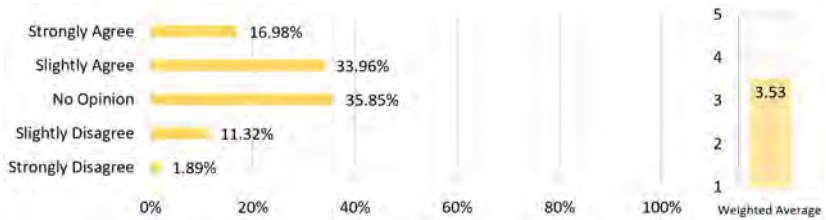
Responses: 52



### Question 13.6

“Quality of surface water”

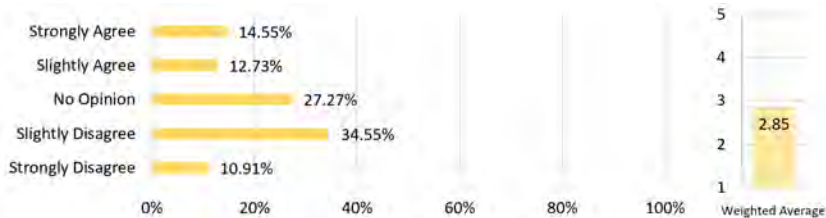
Responses: 53



### Question 13.7

“Enforcement of zoning  
and property maintenance”

Responses: 55

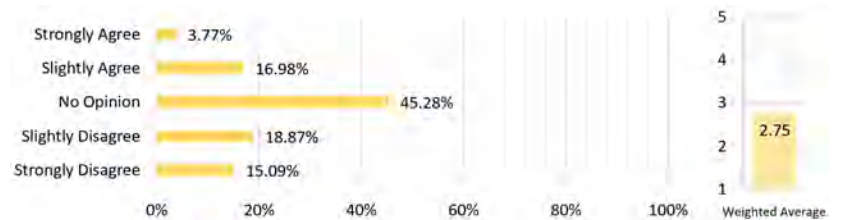




### Question 13.8

**“Amount of farmland converted to residential lots”**

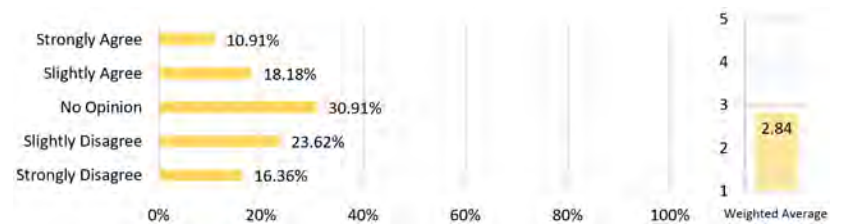
Responses: 53



### Question 13.9

**“Amount of open space, natural areas, and parks”**

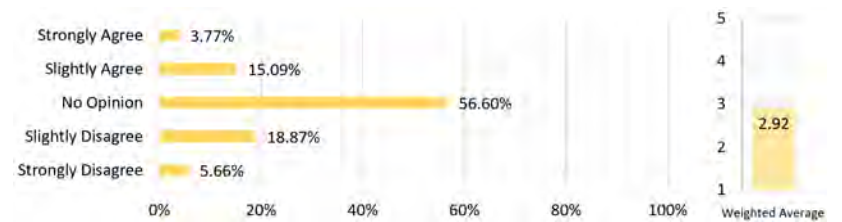
Responses: 55



### Question 13.10

**“Guidance of commercial development”**

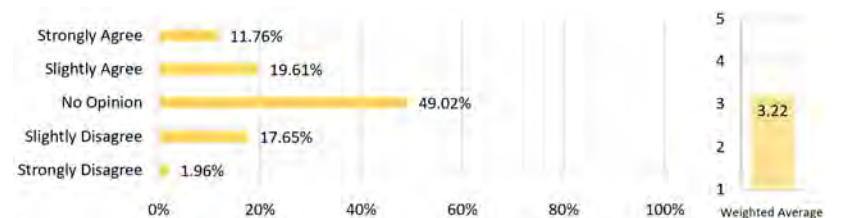
Responses: 53



### Question 13.11

**“Guidance of residential development”**

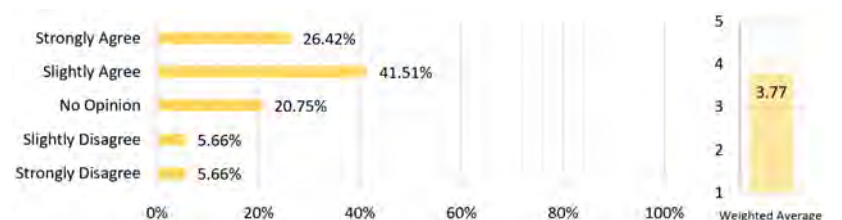
Responses: 51



### Question 13.12

**“Adequacy of public safety (police, fire, etc.)”**

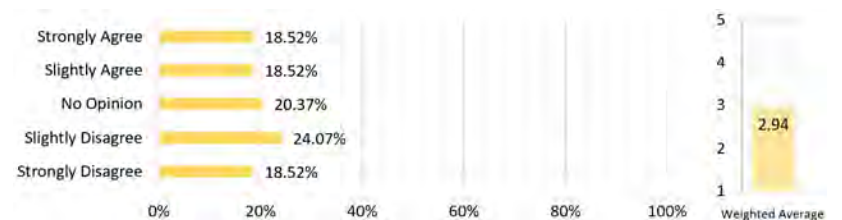
Responses: 53



### Question 13.13

**“Adequacy of shopping areas”**

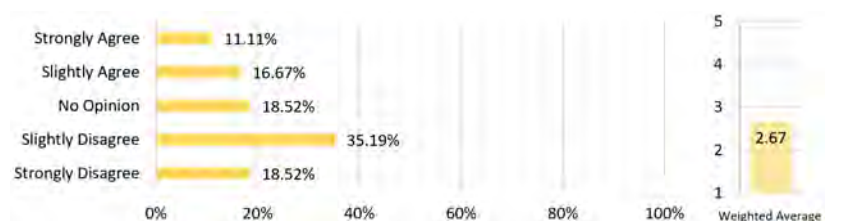
Responses: 54



### Question 13.14

**“Amount of recreational facilities”**

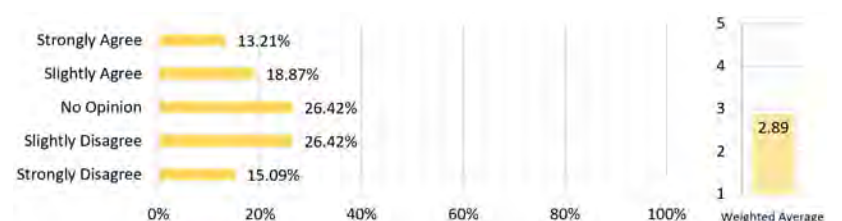
Responses: 54



### Question 13.15

**“Amount of available entertainment and social”**

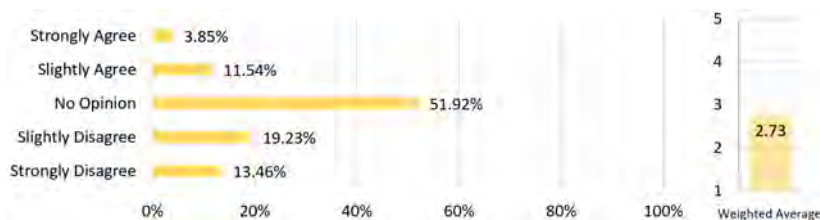
Responses: 53



## Question 13.16

### “New housing costs”

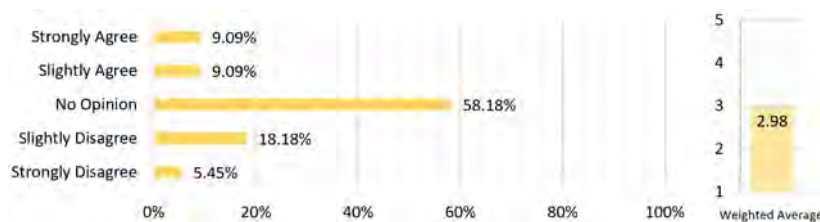
Responses: 52



## Question 13.17

### “Variety of housing options (senior living, rentals, etc.)”

Responses: 55



Out of each of the above subquestions, those most directly related to the objectives of the Watson Township Parks Plan include Questions 13.4 (“*Number of bike trails/paved shoulders*”), 13.6 (“*Quality of surface water*”), 13.9 (“*Amount of open space, natural areas, and parks*”), 13.14 (“*Amount of recreational facilities*”), and 13.15 (“*Amount of available entertainment and social activities*”). The weighted averages for these five questions are consolidated within the table below:

Subquestion	Weighted Avg.
Q 13.4 “Number of bike trails/paved shoulders”	2.67
Q 13.6 “Quality of surface water”	3.53
Q 13.9 “Amount of open space, natural areas, and parks”	2.84
Q 13.14 “Amount of recreational facilities”	2.67
Q 13.15 “Amount of available entertainment and social activities”	2.89

Each of these key questions received an average rating slightly below 3—the midway “*No Opinion*” answer. This suggests that while respondents are generally indifferent about the states of these aspects, they tend toward dissatisfaction. Subquestion 13.6 remains an outlier, though, indicating that respondents are very satisfied with the quality of surface water within Watson Township at an average of 3.53. This has significant implications for the Township’s ability to host water sports such as fishing, boating, and swimming and can be capitalized upon to further protect and complement Watson Township’s surface water. Recent steps have been taken to protect Big Lake through a drain assessment, which, like many Watson Township lakes, suffers from frequent water height fluctuations and subsequent septic field failures for shoreline homes. The impacts of these failures on other lakes should continue to be closely monitored.

However, while subquestions 13.9 and 13.15 received fairly normal distributions centered around a peak of “*No Opinion*”, 13.4 and 13.14 both exhibit extreme skews. When asked about their opinion on the number of bike trails and paved shoulders, 34.55% of respondents answered “*No Opinion*”. Among the remaining answers, though, 45.55% answered that they are some amount dissatisfied with the number while just 27.27% answered that they are some amount satisfied—an 18.28% discrepancy trending toward dissatisfaction.

Likewise, when asked about their opinion on the number of recreational facilities, 18.52% of respondents answered “*No Opinion*”. The most popular answer, however, is “*Slightly Disagree*” at 35.19%; a total of 53.71%—over half of all respondents—answered that they are some amount dissatisfied with the number of facilities, while just 27.78% answered that they are some amount satisfied—a 25.93% discrepancy.



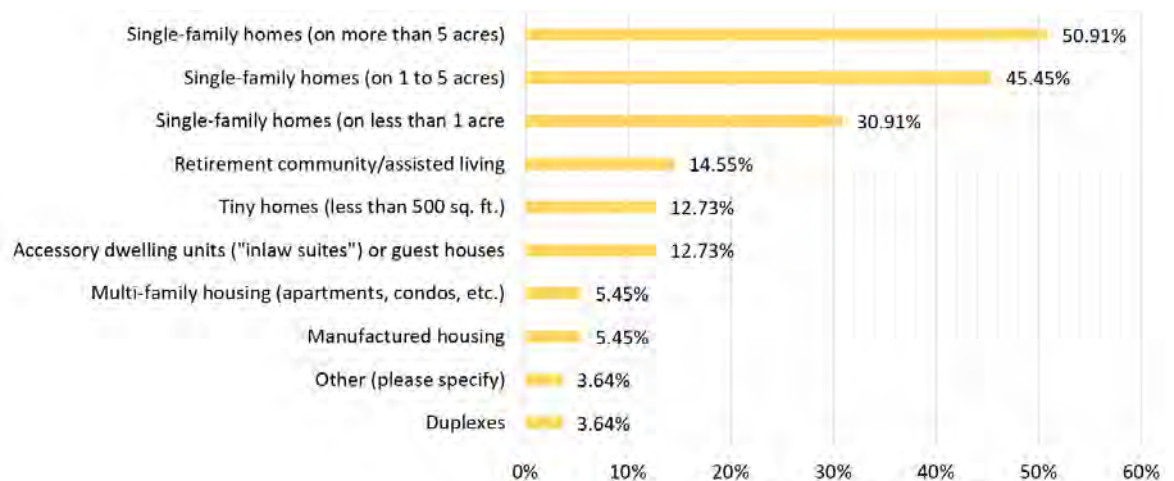
Initial conclusions from these subquestions suggest that respondents are interested in developing new recreational opportunities, be it parks, bike trails, ball fields, or other assets.

The last two questions in this section, 14 and 15 (below), document what types of housing and businesses, if any, respondents would like to see within Watson Township. The results from Question 14 mirror those of Question 7 in which respondents were asked in what type of dwelling they live: Single-family homes on five (5) or more acres is the most popular choice in both, followed by the same on one (1) to five (5) acres, and on less than one (1) acre, accounting for a cumulative 68.63% of all responses. While all categories of housing received some amount of answers, only single-family homes gathered such support; the next most popular answer, retirement communities/assisted living facilities, was only chosen by 14.55% of all participants. Initial conclusions suggest that Watson Township community members are happy with the way their housing stock is distributed and comprised with very little desire to see change.

Results from Question 15 further support maintaining the Township's rural trajectory. The most popular prospective business among respondents are farm markets and agritourism, receiving votes from 55.36% of participants. This is followed by sit-down restaurants and personal services at 37.50% and 26.79%, respectively, and no new businesses in the Township at 21.43%. Many of the most popular options are those one might find in a small, rural town, while the larger impact industries such as financial and business professional services, assembly and manufacturing, research and development, and regional shopping centers, received little to no votes. Once again, results indicate a desire to maintain the Township's rural character and see only appropriately scaled businesses, if any, enter the area.

## Question 14

**“What types of housing would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”**

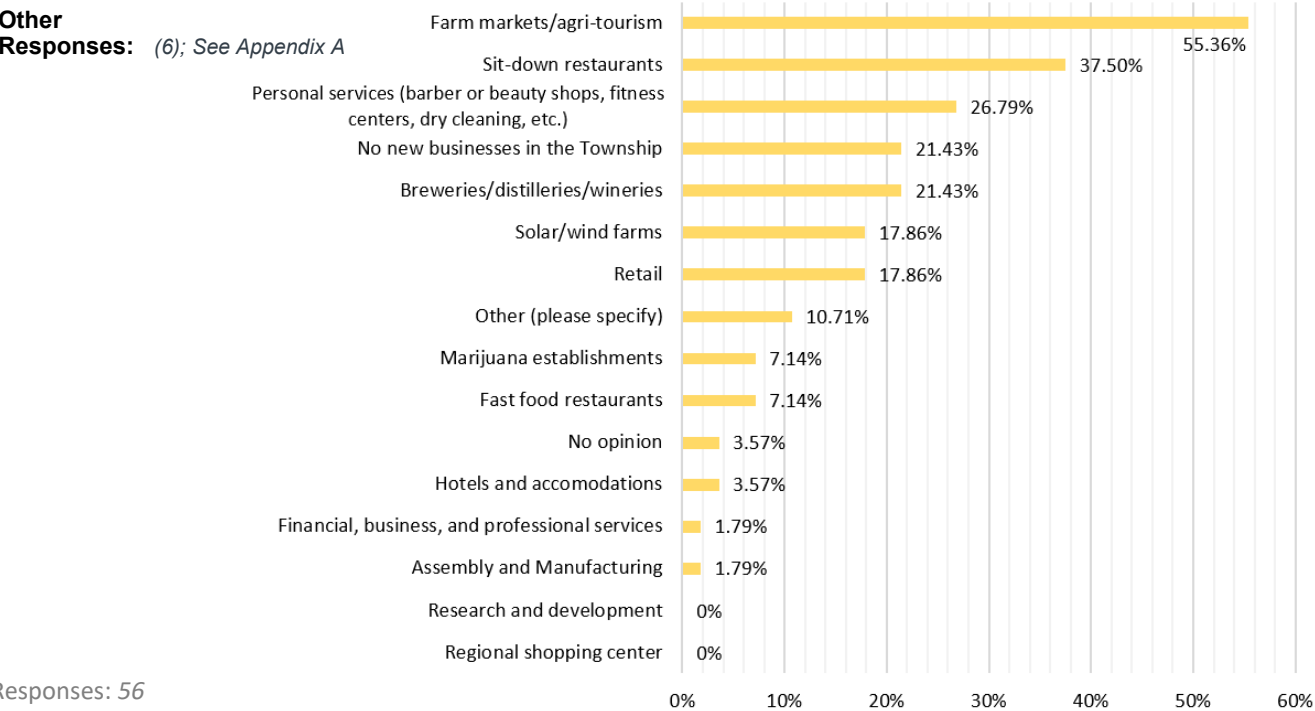


**Other Responses:** (2); See Appendix A

Responses: 55

## Question 15

**“What types of businesses would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”**

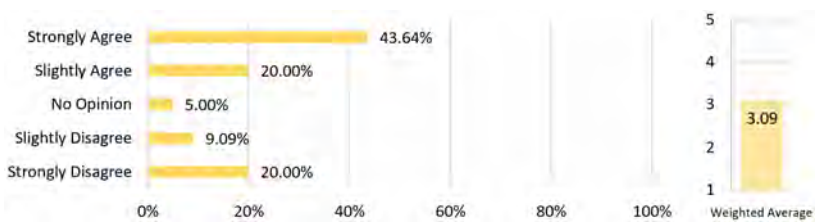


## Preferences (16 – 22)

This section is intended to collect information regarding how respondents feel Watson Township should move forward with specific topics and preferences. Like Question 13 in the previous section, these questions are formatted with the five (5)-step scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Unlike Question 13, though, they are not grouped as subquestions under one larger question since each included statement is unique and independent of any other statement before or after it.

## Question 16

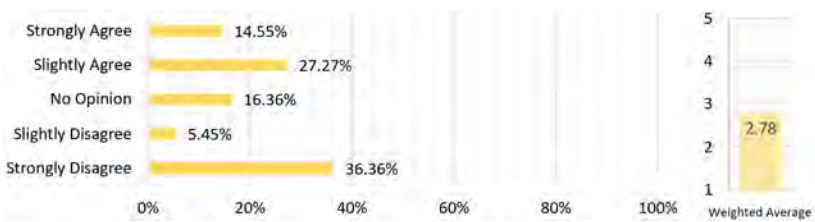
**“Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”**



Responses: 55

## Question 17

**“I would support a dedicated millage in Watson Township to acquire and maintain land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”**

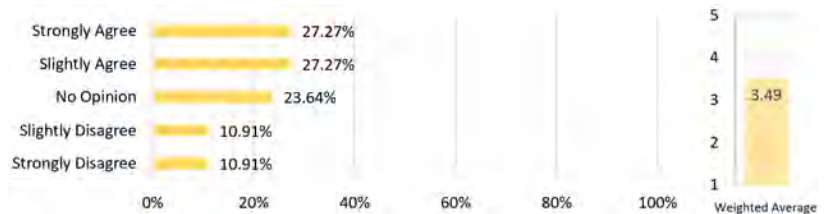


Responses: 55

## Question 18

**“I would support a dedicated road millage in Watson Township to improve public road quality.”**

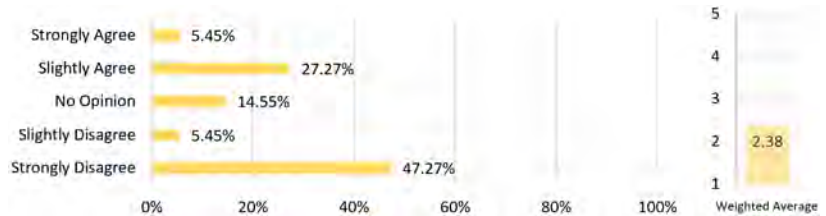
Responses: 55



## Question 19

**“Watson Township needs to attract more businesses and commercial development.”**

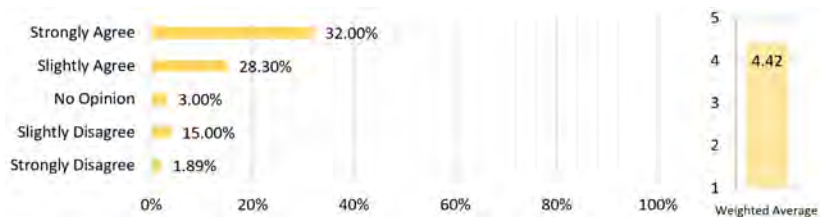
Responses: 55



## Question 20

**“Watson Township should preserve farmland.”**

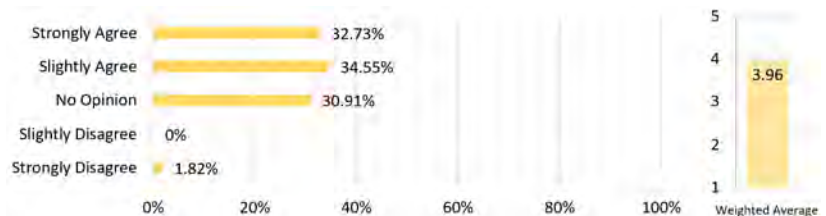
Responses: 53



## Question 21

**“I would be willing to attend a public input meeting about the Watson Township Master Plan and share my thoughts and opinions.”**

Responses: 55



Out of each of the above questions, those most directly related to the objectives of the Watson Township Parks Plan are Questions 16 (“*Number of bike trails/paved shoulders*”) and 17 (“*Quality of surface water*”). The weighted averages for these questions are consolidated within the table below:

Question	Weighted Avg.
<b>Q 16</b> “Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”	3.09
<b>Q 17</b> “I would support a dedicated millage in Watson Township to acquire and maintain land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”	2.78

Both questions received average weights centered around 3—the midway “*No Opinion*” answer. Question 16 trended slightly above collective indifference with “*Strongly Agree*” accounting for 43.64% of all responses. This large peak is leveled out and seconded, however, by the options “*Slightly Agree*” and “*Strongly Disagree*”, both obtaining 20.00% of total answers. Extrapolating these results produces the conclusion that the stakeholders of Watson Township are largely divided on the topic of establishing any recreational assets, but with a majority leaning favorably.

However, Question 17 received fairly opposite results, with “*Strongly Disagree*” collecting 36.36% of

all responses and “*Slightly Disagree*” collecting just 5.45%. This polarization among those who disagree with the proposal indicate a very strongly polarized negative reaction to the concept. This contrasts sharply with the results among those who agree in some capacity with the proposal: “*Slightly Agree*” received 27.27% of all responses and “*Strongly Agree*” received 14.55%. These results, when grouped with “*No Opinion*” at a similar 16.36% suggests that those who are in favor or indifferent to the proposal feel far less strongly about the idea than those who oppose it.

Initial conclusions from these questions suggest that while participants are somewhat agreeable to the idea of acquiring land for parks, trails, and other recreational assets, the preferred method of doing so is unlikely to be through a dedicated millage. Watson Township can use this information to support research into alternative methods of funding to achieve the goals of the Parks Plan.

## Question 22

**“If there is anything else you would like your Watson Township local government to know, please include in the box below any questions, concerns, or other comments you may have.”**

**Other Responses:** (30); See Appendix A for full catalogue of written responses.

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# 7

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Considering community input and the existing conditions of Watson Township, the following goals and objectives have been developed to act as a foundation for the Action Plan to follow. These goals are intended to help the Watson community aspire to accomplish its most ambitious ideas while remaining general enough to be attainable through a creative variety of means; The objective statements are more specific and may be regarded as potential milestones to achieving the goal rather than absolute methodology.

## 1. Enhance Township Character

*A future Township Park will be well maintained and enhance the Watson community character through the stewardship of natural resources and community needs.*

- a. Strategically acquire and develop new park space to meet community needs and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.
- b. Maintain and improve existing recreational assets such as lakes and Township roads for the continued enjoyment of all ages and abilities.
- c. Promote the safety and cleanliness of Township facilities and natural assets.
- d. Maintain a current Recreation Plan that supports the improvement of the Township's quality of life.

## 2. Community Health and Wellness

*Establishing a Township Park and preserving lakes and trails will allow residents and visitors greater opportunity to pursue activities and entertainment that promote a higher quality of life.*

- a. Pursue opportunities to establish park facilities such as sport courts and fields, playground equipment, and other features.
- b. Continue to support residents' and visitors' use of trails throughout the Township.
- c. Continue to engage residents for feedback on future funding methods for park, trail, and facility maintenance.
- d. Support the development of recreational programs that encourage improving health and wellness of Township residents and visitors.

## 3. Accessibility

*A Watson Township Park and existing recreational facilities will be accessible to all residents and visitors.*

- a. Ensure that park installations comply with ADA requirements and pursue universal design, where possible, for the safety and enjoyment of facilities by all ages and abilities.
- b. Develop wayfinding and onsite signage to guide residents and visitors to significant Township recreational assets and features within the park.
- c. Pursue funding opportunities for park establishment, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, Passport Recreation Grant Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.



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# 8 ACTION PLAN

The following section details the overall direction and strategic steps Watson Township will take to meet the goals and objectives set on the previous page. A description of each action step is provided to identify a basis for said step, establish relevant goals, and provide a plan for such action. Strategic action steps should also meet all ADA requirements where applicable. Although not all of the goals and objectives previously established will be achievable within the five-year timeframe of this Parks Plan, the action program is designed to prioritize and place emphasis on those that may be.

Recommendations listed in the sections below are intended to be flexible and are in no way exhaustive of all potential actions. Future circumstances, such as funding and available opportunities, will likely influence the time and duration of projects. The following recommended actions are based on the input received from the community survey, Watson Township officials and staff, and an inventory of existing conditions.

## **Watson Township Park Establishment**

Residents of Watson Township have voiced interest in the establishment of a Township park. The most significant step toward achieving this goal is to acquire an appropriate tract of land for future development. Establishing the park will provide a space for residents and visitors alike to enjoy the Township's natural beauty, host recreational clubs and sports leagues, and facilitate meetups and other social events. Adding the space for these amenities will provide opportunities to promote health and wellness for Township residents within their own community.

Potential items to be developed at said park include:

- Picnic tables and benches
- Gazebo and pavilions
- Various sports fields and courts
- Walking, biking, and running trails
- Disc golf course

## **Trails**

Respondents to the community survey indicated that there was interest in developing more paved and unpaved trails and road shoulders for cycling and other activities. Trails offer a great method for people to exercise and increase their well-being while appreciating the rolling hills and rural character Watson Township has to offer. Since the Township does not have sidewalks, residents may take interest in establishing trails at the future Watson Township Park site or connecting said park to existing snowmobile and ORV trails within the Township.

## **Surface Water Protection**

Community survey results revealed that Watson Township residents and stakeholders take pride in the natural resources and ecology their community offers, with a majority reasonably satisfied with the quality of surface water and amount of natural spaces. One of the Township's biggest recreational assets is its many lakes and streams. Unlike other Townships in Allegan County, much of the lake frontage on the Township's bodies of water remain undeveloped, providing them a more natural and preserved feel that is less available elsewhere.

Watson Township lakes currently face water fluctuation issues that occasionally lead to septic

failures for shoreline homes. A drain assessment has been implemented on Big Lake to help subdue this issue, but continuing to protect the Township's surface water through additional drain assessments, strict lake district zoning regulations, and cooperation with the Michigan DNR will ensure that Township residents and visitors alike will be able to enjoy the lake experience in a quiet, agrarian setting for years to come.

Watson Township lakes and streams are also frequently enveloped by wetlands and wetland soils as identified by the Michigan Resource Inventory System (MIRIS) and National Wetland Inventory (NWI). As waterfront property tends to be a popular desire for new residents and developers, Watson Township may take steps to create an ordinance to apply further protections to their wetland resources beyond those stipulated by higher-level agencies such as the Allegan County Health Department (ACHD) and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Additional protections may include the outright prohibition of wetland construction, buffered setbacks from delineated wetlands and wetland soils, or the restriction of certain construction techniques within Township wetland areas.

The Watson Township Park and Recreation Action Plan is in Table 8.1 below.

**Table 8.1. Watson Township Parks and Recreation Action Plan**

Topic	Improvement	Relates to Goal:			Priority
		1	2	3	
Park Establishment	Acquire land for establishment of a Watson Township community park.	X	X	X	High
	Install wayfinding signage to guide residents and visitors to/within park.	X		X	Medium
	Install park amenities such as benches, pavilions, ball fields, and trails at future Watson Township park sites.	X		X	Medium
Trails	Consider the development of future trails.		X		Low
	Install identifying signage to clearly mark trailheads and crossings.		X	X	Low
	Grade and improve quality of dirt roads for better comfort and accessibility.	X	X		High
Surface Water Protection	Establish further drain assessments on all major Watson Township lakes.		X		Medium
	Create a wetland and/or surface water protection Ordinance.		X	X	High

# A APPENDIX A

## Watson Township Master Plan & Parks Plan Survey, Tabulated Results

The following appendix illustrates the feedback gathered from citizens and stakeholders of Watson Township through the *Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey*, made available online on March 29, 2022 and comprising twenty-two (22) questions regarding demographics and preferences for use in the development of both the draft Township Master Plan and this plan, jointly. The survey was distributed and open for 115 days, acquiring sixty (60) responses and closing on June 29, 2022.

The results of this survey are detailed below.

### Demographics (1 – 9)

#### Question 1

“What is the status of your residency?”

Response	Percent	Count
Full-time resident (year-round)	93.22%	55
Seasonal resident	3.39%	2
Not a resident	3.39%	2
Total responses:		59

#### Question 2

“In which part of the Township do you live?  
(Please refer to the map below)”

Response	Percent	Count
Northeast	35.59%	21
Northwest	18.64%	11
Southeast	25.42%	15
Southwest	16.95%	10
Not a resident (please specify the community in which you reside)	3.39%	2
Total responses:		59

Other

Responses: “Martin Township”  
“hopkins”



Watson Township  
Quadrants  
(As included for visual aid  
with Question 2)

#### Question 3

“What is your age?”

Response	Percent	Count
18 or under	0.00%	0
19-24	0.00%	0
25-34	6.78%	4
35-44	27.12%	16
45-54	18.64%	11
55-64	30.51%	18
65 or older	16.95%	10

Total responses: 59

#### Question 4

“How long have you lived in Watson Township?”

Response	Percent	Count
Less than one year	1.69%	1
One to 4 years	11.86%	7
5 to 9 years	13.56%	8
10 to 25 years	32.20%	19
More than 25 years	37.29%	22
Not a resident	3.39%	2

Total responses: 59

#### Question 5

“In the next five years do you expect to move out of Watson Township?”

Response	Percent	Count
Yes	3.39%	2
No	93.22%	55
Not a resident	3.39%	2

Total responses: 59

## Question 6

**“Which of the following best characterizes your connection to Watson Township (Please select all that apply)?”**

Response	Percent	Count
Student	0.00%	0
Commercial property owner	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	1.69%	1
Residential property owner (Landlord)	3.39%	2
Business owner in the Township	6.78%	4
Work in the Township	8.47%	5
Resident (year-round or seasonal)	94.92%	56
<b>Total responses:</b>		<b>59</b>

**Other Responses:** “property owner”

## Question 7

**“In what type of dwelling do you live?”**

Response	Percent	Count
Single-family home (on more than 5 acres)	44.07%	26
Single-family home (on 1 to 5 acres)	28.81%	17
Single-family home (on less than one acre)	23.73%	14
Manufactured home	3.39%	2
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Multi-family home (condo, apartment, etc.)	0.00%	0
Duplex	0.00%	0
<b>Total responses:</b>		<b>59</b>

## Question 8

**“Do you own or rent your home?”**

Response	Percent	Count
Own	98.31%	58
Rent	1.69%	1
<b>Total responses:</b>		<b>59</b>

## Question 9

**“What is your primary place of work?”**

Response	Percent	Count
Grand Rapids area (including Wyoming, Kentwood, Grandville, Walker)	20.34%	12
Retired	18.64%	11
Allegan	13.56%	8
Other (please specify)	10.17%	6
Otsego-Plainwell area	8.47%	5
Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area	6.78%	4
Martin	5.08%	3
Work from Home	5.08%	3
Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County	5.08%	3
Wayland	3.39%	2
Elsewhere in Allegan County	3.39%	2
Holland-Zeeland area	0.00%	0
Watson Township (but not from home)	0.00%	0
Elsewhere in Barry County	0.00%	0
Stay-at-home parent	0.00%	0
Student	0.00%	0
<b>Total responses:</b>		<b>59</b>

**Other Responses:** “Don’t see this as significant data for survey”

“Hopkins”

“Grand Rapids to the south of K-zoo. I’m a realtor”

“Otr”

## Opinions (10 – 16)

## Question 10

**“In your opinion, Watson Township is growing:”**

Response	Percent	Count
No opinion	14.29%	8
Watson Township is not growing	5.36%	3
Too slowly	12.50%	7
Just right	41.07%	23
Too quickly	26.79%	15
<b>Total responses:</b>		<b>56</b>



## Question 11

**“In your opinion, Watson Township's efforts to guide growth and development have been:”**

Response	Percent	Count
Very poor	3.64%	2
Somewhat poor	18.18%	10
No opinion	47.27%	26
Somewhat good	23.64%	13
Very good	7.27%	4
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

## Question 12

**“Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?”**

Response	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
	<i>Entertainment</i>		<i>Groceries</i>		<i>Recreation</i>	
Allegan	10.91%	6	5.45%	3	6.25%	3
Elsewhere in Allegan County	5.45%	3	10.91%	6	25.00%	12
Elsewhere in Barry County	1.82%	1	0.00%	0	4.17%	2
Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County	1.82%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Grand Rapids area (including Wyoming, Kentwood, Grandville, Walker)	27.27%	15	0.00%	0	18.75%	9
Holland-Zeeland area	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	6.25%	3
Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area	16.36%	9	1.82%	1	6.25%	3
Martin	0.00%	0	1.82%	1	4.17%	2
Otsego-Plainwell area	34.55%	19	76.36%	42	16.67%	8
Watson Township	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	12.50%	6
Wayland	1.82%	1	3.64%	2	0.00%	0
<i>Total responses:</i>		55		55		48

## Question 13

**“How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Watson Township?”**

### Question 13.1

**“Traffic congestion”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	29.09%	16
Slightly Agree	36.36%	20
No Opinion	16.36%	9
Slightly Disagree	12.73%	7
Strongly Disagree	5.45%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

### Question 13.2

**“Traffic speeds”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	27.78%	15
Slightly Agree	38.89%	21
No Opinion	14.81%	8
Slightly Disagree	12.96%	7
Strongly Disagree	5.56%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		54

### Question 13.3

#### “Public road quality”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	16.36%	9
No Opinion	7.27%	4
Slightly Disagree	38.18%	21
Strongly Disagree	27.27%	15
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

### Question 13.4

#### “Number of bike trails/paved shoulders”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	9.09%	5
No Opinion	34.55%	19
Slightly Disagree	27.27%	15
Strongly Disagree	18.18%	10
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

### Question 13.5

#### “Quality of groundwater”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	26.92%	14
Slightly Agree	32.69%	17
No Opinion	25.00%	13
Slightly Disagree	7.69%	4
Strongly Disagree	7.69%	4
<i>Total responses:</i>		52

### Question 13.6

#### “Quality of surface water”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	16.98%	9
Slightly Agree	33.96%	18
No Opinion	35.85%	19
Slightly Disagree	11.32%	6
Strongly Disagree	1.89%	1
<i>Total responses:</i>		53

### Question 13.7

#### “Enforcement of zoning and property maintenance”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	14.55%	8
Slightly Agree	12.73%	7
No Opinion	27.27%	15
Slightly Disagree	34.55%	19
Strongly Disagree	10.91%	6
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

### Question 13.8

#### “Amount of farmland converted to residential lots”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.77%	2
Slightly Agree	16.98%	9
No Opinion	45.28%	24
Slightly Disagree	18.87%	10
Strongly Disagree	15.09%	8
<i>Total responses:</i>		53

### Question 13.9

#### “Amount of open space, natural areas, and parks”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	18.18%	10
No Opinion	30.91%	17
Slightly Disagree	23.64%	13
Strongly Disagree	16.36%	9
<i>Total responses:</i>		54

### Question 13.10

#### “Guidance of commercial development”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.77%	2
Slightly Agree	15.09%	8
No Opinion	56.60%	30
Slightly Disagree	18.87%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.66%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		53

### Question 13.11

**“Guidance of residential development”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	11.76%	6
Slightly Agree	19.61%	10
No Opinion	49.02%	25
Slightly Disagree	17.65%	9
Strongly Disagree	1.96%	1
<i>Total responses:</i>		51

### Question 13.12

**“Adequacy of public safety (police, fire, etc.)”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	26.42%	14
Slightly Agree	41.51%	22
No Opinion	20.75%	11
Slightly Disagree	5.66%	3
Strongly Disagree	5.66%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		53

### Question 13.13

**“Adequacy of shopping areas”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	18.52%	10
Slightly Agree	18.52%	10
No Opinion	20.37%	11
Slightly Disagree	24.07%	13
Strongly Disagree	18.52%	10
<i>Total responses:</i>		54

### Question 13.14

**“Amount of recreational facilities”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	11.11%	6
Slightly Agree	16.67%	9
No Opinion	18.52%	10
Slightly Disagree	35.19%	19
Strongly Disagree	18.52%	10
<i>Total responses:</i>		54

### Question 13.15

**“Amount of available entertainment and social activities”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	13.21%	7
Slightly Agree	18.87%	10
No Opinion	26.42%	14
Slightly Disagree	26.42%	14
Strongly Disagree	15.09%	8
<i>Total responses:</i>		53

### Question 13.16

**“New housing costs”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.85%	2
Slightly Agree	11.54%	6
No Opinion	51.92%	27
Slightly Disagree	19.23%	10
Strongly Disagree	13.46%	7
<i>Total responses:</i>		52

### Question 13.17

**“Variety of housing options (senior living, rentals, etc.)”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	9.09%	5
Slightly Agree	9.09%	5
No Opinion	58.18%	32
Slightly Disagree	18.18%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.45%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

## Question 14

**“What types of housing would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”**

Response	Percent	Count
Single-family homes (on more than 5 acres)	50.91%	28
Single-family homes (on 1 to 5 acres)	45.45%	25
Single-family homes (on less than 1 acre)	30.91%	17
Retirement community/assisted living	14.55%	8
Accessory dwelling units ("inlaw suites") or guest houses	12.73%	7
Tiny homes (less than 500 sq. ft.)	12.73%	7
Manufactured housing	5.45%	3
Multi-family housing (apartments, condos, etc.)	5.45%	3
Duplexes	3.64%	2
Other (please specify)	3.64%	2

Total responses: 55

Other Responses: "none"

*"We moved here for the rural aspect - we are happy with the current amount of housing."*

## Question 15

**“What types of businesses would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”**

Response	Percent	Count
Farm markets/agri-tourism	55.36%	31
Sit-down restaurants	37.50%	21
Personal services (barber or beauty shops, fitness centers,	26.79%	15
Breweries/distilleries/wineries	21.43%	12
No new businesses in the Township	21.43%	12
Retail	17.86%	10
Solar/wind farms	17.86%	10
Other (please specify)	10.71%	6
Fast food restaurants	7.14%	4
Marijuana establishments	7.14%	4
Hotels and accommodations	3.57%	2
No opinion	3.57%	2
Assembly and Manufacturing	1.79%	1
Financial, business, and professional services	1.79%	1
Regional shopping center	0.00%	0
Research and development	0.00%	0

Total responses: 55

## Question 15 (cont.)

Other Responses: "None"

"none"

"home-based businesses"

"sfagag"

*"We moved to Watson onto 40 acres for the remote and private living. If we leave the property it's usually to visit family. We both grew up in Grand Rapids and do not want that for our kids or grandchildren. Yes the internet is difficult to deal with at times but we made this choice and will deal with the services that we need to travel for."*

*"we are a rural community within a short driving distance to any type of businesses we need. Keep us just the way we are."*

## Preferences (16 – 22)

### Question 16

**“Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	7.27%	4
Slightly Agree	43.64%	24
No Opinion	20.00%	11
Slightly Disagree	9.09%	5
Strongly Disagree	20.00%	11

Total responses: 55

### Question 17

**“I would support a dedicated millage in Watson Township to acquire and maintain land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	14.55%	8
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	16.36%	9
Slightly Disagree	5.45%	3
Strongly Disagree	36.36%	20

Total responses: 55



## Question 18

**“I would support a dedicated road millage in Watson Township to improve public road quality.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	27.27%	15
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	23.64%	13
Slightly Disagree	10.91%	6
Strongly Disagree	10.91%	6
Total responses:		55

## Question 19

**“Watson Township needs to attract more businesses and commercial development.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	5.45%	3
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	14.55%	8
Slightly Disagree	5.45%	3
Strongly Disagree	47.27%	26
Total responses:		55

## Question 20

**“Watson Township should preserve farmland.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	32.00%	32
Slightly Agree	15.00%	15
No Opinion	3.00%	3
Slightly Disagree	3.77%	2
Strongly Disagree	1.89%	1
Total responses:		53

## Question 21

**“I would be willing to attend a public input meeting about the Watson Township Master Plan and share my thoughts and opinions.”**

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	32.73%	18
Slightly Agree	34.55%	19
No Opinion	30.91%	17
Slightly Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	1.82%	1
Total responses:		55

## Question 22

**“If there is anything else you would like your Watson Township local government to know, please include in the box below any questions, concerns, or other comments you may have.”**

### Responses:

- “Blight in this area is out of control, we call and nothing is done, tired of looking at smashed vehicles in driveways on my road, depreciates my property while the township taxes keep raising...”
- “A3 Zone to preserve the Watson Hills with minimum 15 acre lots”
- “We are a rural community and wish to stay that way. We feel the local government is trying to make us an urban community. Also the local government is trying to expand its size and power. Taxes a high when compared to the services provided.”
- “Regular office hours for Supervisor, Clerk”
- “For the questions that would not pertain to our family I answered “no opinion”. We love living in the quiet country and do not want more commercial development. Attract more home OWNERS not renters that care very little for the property around them. Encourage local shopping.”
- “Improve the dirt roads with better/more grading and push back/fix all the sides/shoulders of the roads. The roads are getting too narrow unsafe in some areas. More grading. Recover gravel on shoulders.”
- “Thanks for stopping the gravel pit over off 117th Ave for now. Hopefully it's the last time we have to debate it. Nobody here wants it, except the guy making money from it.”
- “More paved roads. Better internet access. Parks and activities for kids ... keep the kids coming back to Watson as they grow older.”
- “We think 5acre lots eat up land. 1 acre is plenty of area for single family. Too much mowing”
- “Thank you all for your service to Watson Township on our behalf; we greatly appreciate it! Keep up the awesome work.”
- “I would like to see Watson focus/spend money on trash/ recycle pickup for all, including people that can't afford a weekly pickup. Our roadsides are trashy and you can see many "poorer" neighborhoods that need some assistance. Is there an ordinance that deals with the build up of trash.? Also I am concerned for the environment, so the use of the "dust control" is an irritation to us.”
- “Please continue to take care of the Blithe in the community. In my opinion because Watson Township is in the perfect location between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids we should continue developing single family homes.”
- “I love everything about Watson Township with the exception of internet service options and our poor well water quality.”
- “Would like to see our elected officials actually work for the money being paid, and once again having office hours without hiring an outside person to do the job. Don't see why our clerk and treasurer need to be paid over and above their annual pay to collect taxes and do elections. That is their job. Your bleeding the township, right down to paying

now an extra \$1,200 for someone to oversee hall rental."

- "We moved out here to be free from the city and all it's rules and regulations. I enjoy living in a primary agricultural county. If I wanted more I would move to a HOA subdivision in the city."
- "'Gravel' road quality and structure is horrible yet we dump loads of money into it each year to pour dust control on it."
- "Less funding for the fire department and absolutely no funding to the parks"
- "Check the typo in question 16. Somewhat disagree is listed twice--once in the wrong spot."
- "Traffic on 16th st going north to 121st and East to 15th then north to 124th for access to the hi-way has gotten a lot heavier in the last couple years. When is the township going to consider paving this stretch of road. The county tries to keep it graded, bit the amount of traffic along with the speed on which the vehicles travel just tears it up. What is the long term plan to finish the pavement the whole length of 16th st?"
- "The grading and maintenance of the dirt roads are awful! Many wash outs, sink holes, and a huge ledge at our drive meeting the road. I love the clean up days that is great, love the bike race also the kids love to sit and watch them go by!"
- "We moved here to live in the country and enjoy country living. Slower pace, less people, less government over site and friendly neighbors but not living on top of each other. I strongly feel the past and current Township plan is moving Watson to being more like an URBAN Township. Zoning and ordnances resemble that of urban areas and not the country. I believe taxes are high and services or low. I also know the Township received a large amount of Federal Covid funds and have not heard a word about how it will be used. I also feel the Township shies away from criticism and conflict. I would like the Township to return to its country roots with reasonable taxes and less government over site."
- "Stop putting up with the turmoil caused by [resident] on Big Lake please!"
- "Watson is a nice township we just don't have a lot to offer. We have to go elsewhere for everything. We don't need more dollar stores, liquor stores or marijuana facilities. We need to maintain our wholesomeness. We do need better care of the dirt roads and more patrols on them. We do need the township ordinances enforced the burning of chemicals trash and anything under the sun is out of hand. You can't drive 222 near the lake and not smell it. I couldn't imagine living there. These people putting up tiny houses all over need to be regulated as well as those popping campers on others land and living out of them dumping sewage all over are a health hazards to everything including our ground water. The schools could be a problem with all the pornographic materials being forced upon children. We need to maintain our small town wholesomeness at all costs and regulate the growth accordingly."
- "Question #16's answers are queued up wrong (there is no "strongly agree" -- and that would be my answer if it gets fixed.) I am strongly in favor of: "16. Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails." Like 110% in favor (probably more)."
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- "Get rid of PCI they are a waste of our tax dollars."
- "Too many dirt roads"
- "Recycling is needed. Broadband should be a priority for the townships infrastructure"
- "#20 I would strongly agree however that is not an option. also most people have larger yards in Watson so why the need for parks?"
- "Quit trying to make Watson Twp into a suburban community township !!!"

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- "Quit trying to make Watson Twp into a suburban community township !!!"



# B APPENDIX B

## Notice of 30-Day Public Commenting and Review Period

The following screenshot features the legal notice published in *The Grand Rapids Press* on November 6, 2022 announcing the start of Watson Township's 2023 Master Plan and 2023 – 2028 Parks and Recreation Plan public commenting and review periods. The information to the left of the screenshot below highlights significant aspects of the legal notice.

### LOCAL MARKETPLACE

HOME LEGALS LEGAL NOTICE

#### Notice of Public Hearing Commenting Period Watson Township Planning Commission Master Plan Update Parks and Recreation Plan Adoption

Public notice is hereby given that, in accordance with Section 125.3861 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans, the Watson Township Planning Commission has begun the following actions:

1. Thirty (30)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023-2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan.
2. Forty-two (42)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023 Watson Township Master Plan update.

Members of the public are invited to review the draft Master Plan and draft Parks and Recreation Plan and submit any comments to Jay Roberts-Eveland, Planning Commission Secretary, Watson Township, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or by email to Jason Derry, Watson Township Zoning Administrator, at [jderry@pcimi.com](mailto:jderry@pcimi.com).

Watson Township has scheduled a public hearing for the draft Parks and Recreation Plan on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010, to review the Parks and Recreation Plan and receive comments. Copies of the Parks and Recreation Plan can be accessed at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or online at [www.watsontownshipmi.gov](http://www.watsontownshipmi.gov).

Watson Township has scheduled a public hearing for the draft Master Plan on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010, to review the Master Plan and receive comments. Copies of the current and draft Master Plans can be accessed at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or online at [www.watsontownshipmi.gov](http://www.watsontownshipmi.gov).

Written comments will be received until the night of the respective hearings at the above-stated address.

Watson Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services at the meetings to individuals with disabilities upon 72 hours advanced notice to the Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk by email, phone, or mail.

JAY ROBERTS-EVELAND  
WATSON TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
SECRETARY  
616-706-9256

Notice of Public Hearing Commenting Period Watson Township Planning Commission Master Plan Update Parks and Recreation Plan Adoption Public notice is hereby given that, in accordance with Section 125.3841 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans, the Watson Township Planning Commission has begun the following actions: 1. Thirty (30)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023-2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan. 2. Forty-two (42)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023 Watson Township Master Plan update. Members of the public are invited to review the draft Master Plan and draft Parks and Recreation Plan and submit any comments to Jay Roberts-Eveland, Planning Commission Secretary, Watson Township, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or by email to Jason Derry, Watson Township Zoning Administrator, at [jderry@pcimi.com](mailto:jderry@pcimi.com). Watson Township has scheduled a public hearing for the draft Parks and Recreation Plan on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010, to review the Parks and Recreation Plan and receive comments. Copies of the Parks and Recreation Plan can be accessed at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or online at [www.watsontownshipmi.gov](http://www.watsontownshipmi.gov). Watson Township has scheduled a public hearing for the draft Master Plan on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010, to review the Master Plan and receive comments. Copies of the current and draft Master Plans can be accessed at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or online at [www.watsontownshipmi.gov](http://www.watsontownshipmi.gov). Written comments will be received until the night of the respective hearings at the above-stated address. Watson Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services at the meetings to individuals with disabilities upon 72 hours advanced notice to the Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk by email, phone, or mail. JAY ROBERTS-EVELAND WATSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION SECRETARY 616-706-9256

◆ Inclusion of the 2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan.

◆ Issue Number and Digital Location (see above)

Published in: The Grand Rapids Press Refcode: #0010497597-01 Print

◆ Publishing Date (see above)

Post Date: 11/06 Updated: 11/07 12:34 AM

Post Date: 11/06 Updated: 11/07 12:34 AM

Report This Ad

Published in: The Grand Rapids Press Refcode: #0010497597-01 Print

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The following screenshots feature the legal notice published in *The Allegan County News* on November 17, 2022 announcing the intent to host a public hearing for discussion and approval of Resolution #12-7-2022, following completion of Watson Township's 2023 – 2028 Parks and Recreation Plan 30-day public commenting and review period. The infographics below and on the following page highlight significant aspects of the legal notice and publication.

## Notice

### of Public Hearing

#### Watson Township Planning Commission Parks and Recreation Plan Adoption

Public notice is hereby given that, in accordance with Section 125.3841 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans, the Watson Township Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing for Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010, to seek comment on and take action on recommending or not recommending adoption of the final Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan to the Township Board.

Copies of the Parks and Recreation Plan are available for public viewing at the Watson Township Hall, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or online at [www.watsontownshipmi.gov](http://www.watsontownshipmi.gov).

Members of the public are invited to review the final Parks and Recreation Plan and submit any comments to Jay Roberts-Eveland, Planning Commission Secretary, Watson Township, 1895 118th Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010 or by email to Jason Derry, Watson Township Zoning Administrator, at [jderry@pcimi.com](mailto:jderry@pcimi.com). Written comments will be received until the night of the respective hearings at the above-stated address.

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JAY ROBERTS-EVELAND  
WATSON TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION SECRETARY  
616-706-9256

✦ Inclusion of the 2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan.







## Planning Commission Resolution of Approval

### WATSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

### ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Resolution # 12-7-2022

At a regular meeting of the Watson Township Planning Commission held on <sup>December 7</sup> ~~January 6~~, 2022, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Planning Commission member Jay Evland and was seconded by Planning Commission Member Dawn Ramey:

**A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF THE 2023 – 2028 WATSON  
TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN TO THE WATSON TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND CONSTITUTING PLANNING COMMISSION  
APPROVAL OF SUCH PLAN.**

WHEREAS, Watson Township has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2023 through 2028, and

WHEREAS, Watson Township began the process of developing the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of Watson Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* through a community survey from March to July 2022 and various workshop meetings, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* for a period of at least 30 days in which the Plan could be reviewed at the Watson Township website and Watson Township Hall, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on December 7, 2022 at the Watson Township Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan*, and

WHEREAS, Watson Township has developed the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for Watson Township, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Watson Township Planning Commission hereby recommends adoption of the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* to the Watson Township Board of Trustees.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0

Absent: 1

**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: December 7, 2022

By:   
Bruce Bos  
Watson Township Planning Commission  
Chairperson

# Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

1

**WATSON TOWNSHIP MICHIGAN**  
**1895 118th Ave. Allegan, MI 49010**

**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**MEETING DATE: Dec 7, 2022**

## **DRAFT MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER: 7:00pm @ Watson Township Hall**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Bruce Bos; John Caras; Shawn Caulder; Bev McKinnon; Owen Ramey; Jay Roberts-Eveland :  
Quorum:

**VISITORS:** Jason Derry, PCI; Bradley Stalker

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** John Caras requested an addition to the agenda under Old Business: add; discussion of modifying A-2 Agricultural Conservation District

**MOTION:** Shawn Caulder

**SECOND:** Bev McKinnon

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

w/correction: " To table discussion about the **A-1** District ordinance..."

"To table discussion about the **A-2** District ordinance..."

**MOTION:** Jay Roberts-Eveland

**SECOND:** Shawn Caulder

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Chair, Bruce Bos requested that Jay Roberts-Eveland read the Public Notice, in accordance with Section 125.3841 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans, the Watson Township Planning Commission has begun the following actions:

1. Thirty (30)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023-2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan
2. Forty (42)-day review and commenting period for the public hearing draft of the 2023 Watson Township Master Plan update.

Bruce Bos asked Jason Derry, PCI, to address the Planning Commission on the status of both the Parks Plan and the Master Plan update.

Jason Derry, PCI stated that only the Parks Plan could be addressed tonight because the Master Plan timeline was still open for commenting until Public Hearing in January 2023.

Bev McKinnon requested that we close the Public Hearing for the Master Plan.

Public Hearing for the Master's Plan closed at 7:17pm

Passed: Unanimous

**7:17pm:** Bruce Bos; **Opened Public Hearing** for review of the Parks Plan.

Jay Roberts-Eveland read the Public Hearing notice

Jason Derry, PCI, shared that there was only clarifying language changes made concerning the Planning Commissions roll with the Parks Plan.

Jason Derry, PCI requested a copy of the minutes and copy of the signed resolution. The Planning Commission will forward the document to the Township Board at which time the adoption will take place and be published.

Jay Roberts-Eveland read the Public Hearing notice.

Bruce Bos addressed the need for a correction of the resolution date; to December 7, 2022.



**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Bradley Stalker asked when the Parks Plan draft would be complete.

Jason Derry, PCI, answered the question stating that after he received the signed resolution and the meeting minutes- the official document will be sent for recommendation to the township board and once adopted it will be placed on the website and along with the Master Plan.

Bev McKinnon: Point of Order- requested that we close the Public Hearing Motion: To close the Public Hearing for review of the Parks Plan.

Owen Ramey: Motion

Second: John Caras

Unanimous

**MOTION:** to Close Public Hearing

Motion: John Caras

Second: Owen Ramey

Unanimous

Public Hearing closed at 7:33pm

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**a) Discussion of modifying Agricultural A2 Agricultural Conservation District:**

John Caras addressed the Planning Commission, per request of the Township Board, about a concern for the Planning Commission to review and update the requirements for land/parcel size, land splits, and frontage requirements.

Jason Derry, PCI, explained the Land Division Act. He also stated that every jurisdiction has the right to adopt more or less restrictions.

A lengthy discussion followed with Planning Commissioners asking "why the urgency" for review; how increasing requirements would affect landowners or new owners; comparisons to other area ordinances; request for more clear direction and guidance from the Township Board; land management issues per infrastructure needs; aligning with the community survey supporting and protecting the agricultural/rural nature of Watson

**4**

Township; unintentional consequences that might occur with adjustments to the A-2 being modified; a need to review the ordinance and finding a compromise; the length of time it will take for a complete review.

Jason Derry, PCI, will provide a comparison of a township ordinance for the Planning Commission. Bruce Bos shared that the ordinance for A-2 is on the website for commissioners' review. John Caras will ask the township board for guidance and clarity on their request.

**Member Comments:**

John Caras addressed the need for usage of the new and protected township emails. He also shared that the Michigan Township Association training is open to all Planning Commissioners.

**Motion to Adjourn: 8:15pm**

**Motion: Jay Roberts Eveland**

**Second: Shawn Caulder**

**Submitted by: Jay Roberts-Eveland- December 8, 2022**

## Township Board Resolution of Approval

### WATSON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

#### ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Resolution # 1-5-2023

At a regular meeting of the Watson Township Board of Trustees held on January 5, 2023, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Board member Cara and was seconded by Board Member Harris:

#### **A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 – 2028 WATSON TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN.**

WHEREAS, Watson Township has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2023 through 2028, and

WHEREAS, Watson Township began the process of developing the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of Watson Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan* for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on December 7, 2022 at the Watson Township Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the *2023 – 2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan*, and

WHEREAS, Watson Township has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for Watson Township, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Watson Township Board of Trustees voted to adopt said 2023 – 2028 *Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan*.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Watson Township Board of Trustees hereby adopts the 2023 – 2028 *Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan*.

Yeas: Morris, Calder, Travis, Caran, Hawick


Nays:

Absent:

**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**


Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 5, 2023

By: 

Kevin Travis  
Watson Township Board  
Watson Township Supervisor

*I, Kelli Morris, Watson Township Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Watson Township Board of Trustees at a Regular Meeting thereof held on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023.)*

Signed: 

Kelli Morris  
Watson Township Board  
Watson Township Clerk

# Township Board Meeting Minutes

**Watson Township Board Meeting  
1895 118<sup>th</sup> Ave. Allegan, MI 49010  
January 5, 2023**

**Called to order: 7:00 P.M.**

**Present:**

Kevin Travis, Stephanie Caulder, John Caras, Michelle Harris, and Kelli Morris.

**Absent:**

None.

**Agenda:**

Trustee Harris made a motion to approve the agenda, Treasurer Caulder supported, all in favor, motion carried.

**Minutes:**

Trustee Harris made a motion to approve the minutes from December 1, 2022, with clerical corrections, Treasurer Caulder supported, all in favor, motion carried.

**Bills:**

Treasurer Caulder made a motion to pay the bills in the amount of \$25,265.21; Trustee Caras supported, all in favor, motion carried.

**Supervisor Budget Amendments:**

Supervisor Travis made a motion to make the following budget amendments:

1. \$3,000.00 from 101-000-999 to Website
2. \$8,843.17 from 101-000-999 to Fire (for SCBA Equipment)

Treasurer Caulder supported, all in favor, motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Caulder read the Treasurer's report. Clerk Morris made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report, Trustee Harris supported, all in favor, motion carried.

**REPORTS:**

**A. Supervisor:**

Supervisor Travis reported on the annual County Road Commission meeting for paving projects. He shared that 124<sup>th</sup> will be paved from Butternut Creek to 15<sup>th</sup> St.

**B. Planning Commission:**

Trustee Caras reported on a December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting that included public hearings for the "Parks Plan" and the "Master Plan". Other topics of discussion for that meeting included property splits, with most of the discussion being on the A-2 district. The discussion possibilities included increasing the road frontage from 300 ft. to 600 ft. and the parcel size from 5 acres to 10 acres. The next planning commission meeting is Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>.

**C. Martin Fire Department:**

Chief Knight attended and gave the board a written and oral report for the month including fire calls, (2) medical calls in Watson Township, and 1 person starting the Fire Academy.

**D. Hopkins Fire Department:**

None.

**E. Libraries:**

Reports were emailed.

**F. Sexton:**

Mark Simpson reported 11 burial plots sold this month. No funerals or burials.

**F. Code Enforcement:**

Supervisor Travis reported that Officer Stuart will be stepping down due to a change in work schedule. The supervisor has a possible candidate. The board also discussed listing the position on the website.

**G. County Commissioner:**

Gale Dugan reported several commissioner meetings-topics included a third Judge for 2024 for Allegan and Kalamazoo County; the possibilities surrounding making Allegan Township a county seat by a vote of the people; and the different options of making the space needed for the new offices coming to the county. He also let the board know that the county road commission will be "chip sealing" 16<sup>th</sup> Street from the township line to Timber Ridge Bay Dr. this season. The commission also discussed proposed projects for 2024.



**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Open- 7:21 P.M.

One resident did want to thank the board and others serving the township for their service.

Public Comment Closed 7:22 P.M.

**Old Business:****A. Parks Plan Resolution:**

Trustee Caras made a motion to adopt Resolution 1-5-2023 "A Resolution adopting the 2023-2028 Watson Township Parks and Recreation Plan"; Trustee Harris supported. Roll Call Vote taken by Supervisor Travis: Morris=yes; Caulder- yes; Caras=yes; Harris=yes and Travis=yes. Supervisor Travis declared the resolution adopted by a vote of 5-yes and 0-no votes. Trustee Caras also wanted to give the Planning Commission members "Kudos" for doing a great job in getting this plan done in time to apply for a grant they are attempting to obtain.

**New Business:****A. Shipping Containers:**

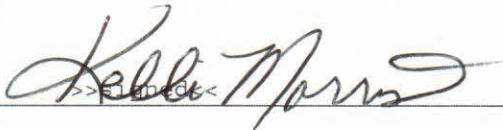
Supervisor Travis explained a question concerning the legality of the use of "shipping containers" as a unit of storage on a property in Watson Township. After some research as the current Ordinances are written, these units would fall under the townships "junk car" ordinance and would not be allowed. The supervisor and board discuss this subject matter further and what (if any) specific regulations should be put in place to allow them in certain situations. Trustee Harris made a motion to ask the planning commission to discuss a possible zoning ordinance concerning the use of a shipping container as a storage unit, Trustee Caras supports, all in favor, motion carried.

**Adjourn:**

Supervisor Travis made a motion to adjourn, Trustee Harris supported, all in favor, motion carried.

Adjourn:

7:51 PM



Kelli Morris